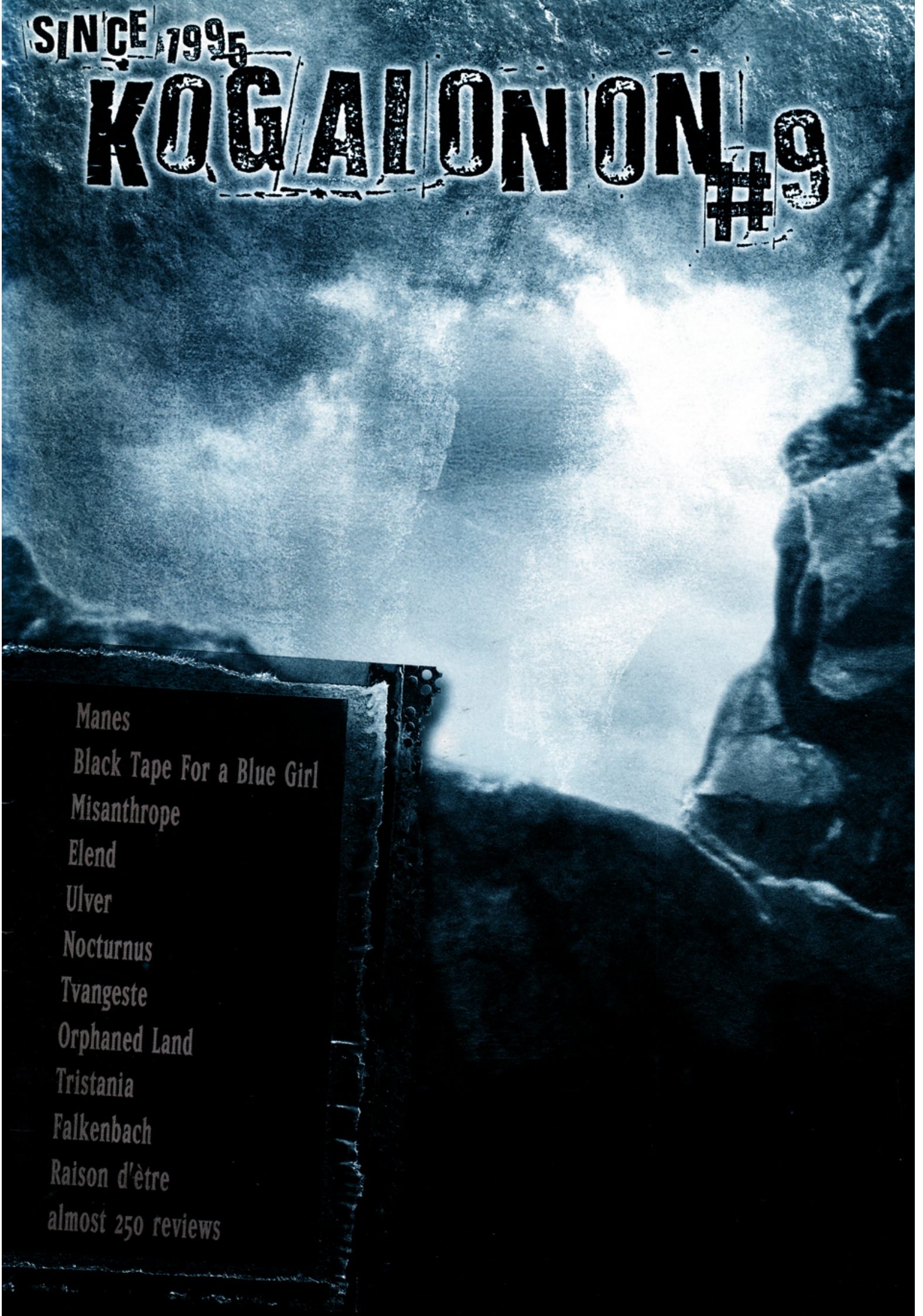
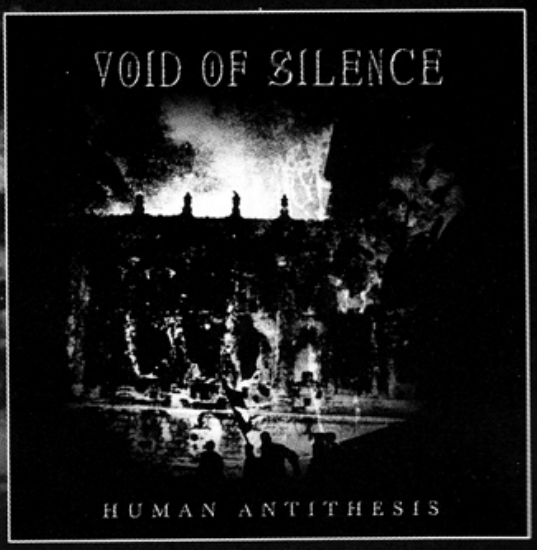

SINCE 1995
KOGAION #9
Manes
Black Tape For a Blue Girl
Misanthrope
Elend
Ulver
Nocturnus
Tvangeste
Orphaned Land
Tristania
Falkenbach
Raison d'être
almost 250 reviews

VOID OF SILENCE

the third Opus, featuring new vocalist Alan Nemtheanga from Primordial.
The final soundtrack of the dark side of the soul...
unbelievable, untouchable, unbounded.

Band: VOID OF SILENCE
Title: Human Antithesis
Format: Digipack-CD

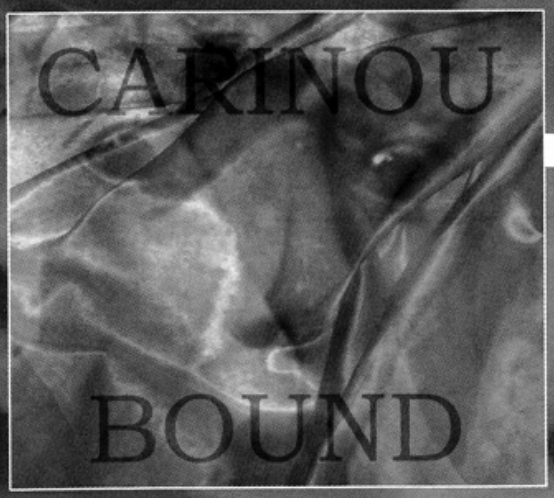




enid

Band: ENID
Title: Gradwanderer
Format: Digipack-CD

a simple and complex album.
blues, swing, rock,
folk and epic ballads fused in
60 minutes of indipendent metal.



CARINOU

Band: CARINOU
Title: Bound
Format: Digipack-CD

negative metallic rock
the new band of
Frederik Soderlund from Puissance,
a misanthropic delirium of darkness and
morbid melodies, already a Cult.

STILL HOT







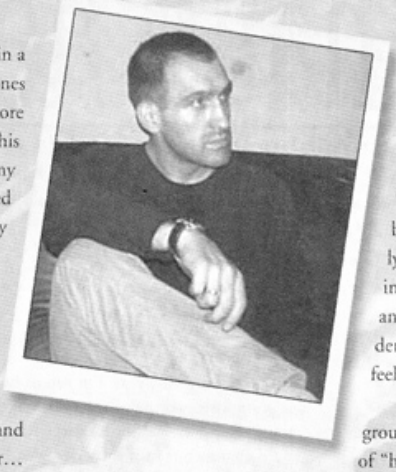
code666

code666 - via billi 2 - 40026 imola - Italy
www.code666.net - info@code666.net

AURAL music

code666 is a sublabel of aural music www.auralmusic.com

Greetings for all of us!



Well, I've noticed that it is hard for someone (my case!) to be sincere, especially if in a rhetorical manner, just because this can only cause the act of "labeling"... for the ones who read, judge and sympathize, which is pretty soon followed by other even more dangerous acts such as burying and mourning the person as if he really was dead! This was the feeling I came to experience right after releasing the previous issue of my beloved "Kogaionon". Everybody (I refer now to my few faithful readers) pictured "Kogaionon movie" as a last breath, like a swan's song... like a farewell letter! My dearest fellows bear with me still as I am not dead... at least, not yet!

I think I am a poor writer if trying to define the feeling... the sensation... I am overwhelmed of... in the moment I hold in my hands a new issue of this magazine! Accomplishment... satisfaction, delightful exhaustion, isolation, depression... thrilling enthusiasm... I really do not have a clue what it is exactly but I can tell for sure, it is a special exquisite experience! If I was to rate this very idea, in a Metallic approach, I would say there is something mystical, unknown and mesmerizing deep inside my inner Self that guides me to Dark... towards magic or... other weird realms... but I think I better open my eyes... as time for being and acting childish has passed since a long time ago!

Perhaps these 9 years since my first issue was released indeed must have deformed both my life and its priorities because the truth is simple: "Kogaionon" remained in poll-position! It seems not to matter anymore which is the secret life... the public or the private ones... They all blend together... entwining or disassociating... who can really know?! Anyway..., in the end, the facts ought to matter and to stand for a cause! I suppose that all ideas/desires never acted or completed are to be labeled as COWARDICE! And perhaps it finally matters less if what I had accomplished is not exactly what I initially had in mind... Is it self-content? Is it superficiality? Is it a limitation? Trust me, my friends, it matters no more! For as many demagogues, remonstrators, quarrelers or specialists activate in music field today... ignorance might be the ultimate appropriate response!

This new chapter, as structure, is identical with the previous ones meaning it features and it is built on a similar core: I-performing almost everything and Mihaela consulting me and translating all the stuff. I had chosen, for this issue, to guest here some special collaborators in order to broaden "Kogaionon"'s horizons from its classical line, in which the magazine was constructed for the last couple of years, so that it might become a rising platform for some people: Lars, Roy, Lus, Dani and Matei.

I do thank you all either for collaboration or believing in "Kogaionon" mission (labels, bands, magazines and friends)!

If you need to retrospect to the magazine's content, then you'll discover a pretty large suite of interviews with comprehensive specific questions, which sometimes figured half of the answers... but there is more than that..., there are many intriguing curiosities and spicy details! If some of my interviewees were rather succinct perhaps there was not enough time for them to answer or maybe they were not in a mood suitable for such... or maybe it all meant just a polite refuse to forward the right true answer! Well, it was their choice and I respect such!

I must inform you, there are fewer reviews than the usual but I deliberately preferred "to choose" not "to pick" therefore I skipped many albums either because of the magazine's limited space or (more likely!) because I might have come to a point of saturation in writing and writing over and over again about clones and solely clones! If some of you (or your works) incidentally belong to the categories up mentioned and thus feel frustrated irritated or offended, I sincerely apologize!

It is already a tough truth to admit that underground Metal fanzine becomes more and more a matter of "history" and those who venture out on such road are to be numbered on one hand's fingers. Perhaps I consider myself a pensioner already, anachronous or nostalgic, but I still believe in this cause! And I still put my heart into this! Well, I find disturbing and even annoying (it amuses me sometimes!) to read about colleagues of mine who complain about this irreversible approach: Internet replacing almost everything that is enclosed in "written means" of expression! It is only natural, my brothers in arms, we live in the III-rd Millennium! If you desire to act... take all risks and chances, don't come out with various deplorable excuses! To confront Future is to accept transformation... evolution or otherwise to face resignation, disappointment, frustration and nostalgia... As long as you act upon your heart and soul... as long as you keep devotion alive, there is no way for your beliefs to fade away! At most, they may reach transformation and come out in a different form! There is no other way as otherwise we may come to believe that money, personal frustrations (or those 10 years of Rock) represented the very reasons because of which we intercrossed Metal dimension... If so... you better back away... end of discussion! The same goes just similar in any other topic including the unfair fight against mp-3!

I don't want to make false promises and neither have I desired to hold back the fact that in consequence of a conversation I had with a "Kogaionon" fan I might bring up "Kogaionon" # 10 as a "holy issue", one to come up with a special free CD containing a full scan of all "Kogaionon" pages from the very first issue till the very last! It would be a symbol of how I perceive the fusion of old/new, classic/ modern... but time shall tell if it is going to happen or not!

This would be all for the moment! I hope you will delightfully surf into the realm of this very new "Kogaionon" challenge and let the smell of fresh printed paper keep you everlastingly awake!
Underground will never die!

Blessings,
Doru, February 2004

Doru Atomei, OP12, CP3, Ploiesti, 2000, PH, Romania,
www.kogaionon.com, kogaionon@xnet.ro

03 Editorial
04 What's new?
08 Manes
12 Black Tape For A Blue Girl
14 Misanthrope
21 Elend
26 Ulver
32 Press reviews
34 Nocturnus
39 Tvangeste
45 Orphaned Land
52 Tristania
57 Falkenbach
60 Raison d'Etre
64 Album reviews

oskoreigraphix
www.oskorei.net

What's new?

Since all news actually lose their prime meaning once placed in a annual magazine, it crossed my mind I should ask some of my friends to reveal a few thoughts, in a general view, regarding the past year... how was 2003 (1) and which may be the expectations for 2004 (2)...

Some of them answered in a full extended manner while others divagated... All discussions were framed in the first two months of this year... let's see what came out of such!

Francesco Palumbo/
MY KINGDOM MUSIC (label)

1. "It was a good year with few but important release like KLIMT 1918 'Undressed Momento' CD and RAIN PAINT 'Nihil Nisi Mors' CD. The first one was acclaimed like one of the most surprising debut band with a top album in Orkus magazine in Germany. The same was for the confirmation of the value of our previous releases like Crowhead 'Frozen' CD, DEINONYCHUS 'Mournument' CD, ROOM WITH A VIEW 'First Year Departure' CD."

2. "First of all to have a great year and I hope to obtain a good distribution all over the world for my release. At the end of January will be out my newest releases FORGOTTEN SUNRISE 'Ru:mipu:dus' CD and CREST OF DARKNESS 'Evil Knows Evil' CD, while in April will be out the new DEINONYCHUS album recorded in Rome and titled 'Insomnia'. Other scheduled albums are CROWHEAD and ROOM WITH A VIEW in October and the new RAIN PAINT and KLIMT 1918 'Dopoguerra' for January 2005."

Florian Dammasch/ENID (band)

1. "Like almost every year it has been one full of light and shadow. There have been a lot of awful happenings, especially in mine and also Martin's private lives, but also within the band - and on the other side some really happy moments and great results of our work. With ENID we have recorded our new album 'Gradwanderer' (which is a wordplay meaning the wanderer walking straight but also wanderer on the edge) in September and October, together with our producer Patrick Damiani in his Tidal Wave studios in Karlsruhe/Germany. It was the most demanding experience we've made so far with the band - the result seems brilliant to us, but it has also been some kind of pure hell recording, mixing and mastering over an hour of pretty complex material within 12 days. Above all Martin and Patrick went through the fire to finish that album in the utmost genius way, and what to say... they succeeded. After the recordings the band split up, our second guitarist and our live drummer had to leave us. So, we're a trio at the moment, unable to enter a stage and with no concrete idea about the future of ENID. You see, we've paid a high price for the sensation of having recorded the best album of our career. Light and shadow, like I said. I'm of good will to continue with ENID and I'm optimistic we will do - most probably in a different way than before, but that doesn't have to be worse of course.

In the meantime I've started a new band called EISMALSOTT, together with the two left ENID members and a friend of mine called Aínvar. We have been so lucky being able to sign a contract with the German Black Attakk label (follow up to Last Episode), we've recorded a 7" named 'Best before:spring' lately and it looks like some promising thing. Hm, nah... to me it seems like light and shadow are balanced once again. The Big Balance probably..."

2. "For me personally it's like always: finding my place in life, freedom and luck... With ENID I can just hope a lot of listeners will recognize the bandwidth 'Gradwanderer' stands for in music, that they will notice how varied and marvellous the material on that album is. Code666 play an important role for the future of our band - with good promotion and good results of their work we all will be happy and strong enough to start a second attack with that band. Would be a pity to quit, at least that's my opinion.

EISMALSOTT is my big hope for 2004 - we have so much really fine material and plans to record a MCD and an album this year. I'm full of hope EISMALSOTT is going to develope to my personal play field for all my musical and lyrical ideas. After these two more releases we'll change our musical style radically, as both Johannes and I have the feeling to have ended with our area of Black Metal. If you have listened to the latest MANES release you will have an idea what I'm talking about... maybe."

Mr. Northwind/
I CAME FROM DARKNESS (RIP) zine

1. "2003 was, to me, another year in the embrace of Black & Death Metal, and Occultism. Quite a few interesting books, zines and CDs came out last year, providing me some moments of real darkness and enabling me to delve further into the mysteries of life and death. I was also able to complete and release the debut issue of THE SINISTER FLAME, my new zine, in the end of the year, a fact bringing me great joy. The zine is 48/A4 pages, featuring interviews with SINOATH, BESATT, CRAFT, GRIFFAR, MORTEM, DERKETA and SHINING. Lots of reviews and some articles are included as well. Those interested in the issue can purchase a copy by sending 5 euros or bucks to: THE SINISTER FLAME, P.O. BOX 49, 57101 SAVONLINNA, FINLAND. Trades are okay, too. Sometimes."

2. "Personally, to dive even further in the bottomless sea of Occultism. I will also eventually start working on another issue of THE SINISTER FLAME, but that issue shall be a bit less about the musical side of things and a bit more about Occultism than #1. Actually I have plans to make #2 kind of like a 'split' issue, half of the contents being articles and studies concerning the Occult, while the other part is in the vein of a more traditional zine with interviews, reviews and such. But who knows. No promos are accepted now, so please do not send anything until you hear otherwise. Doing everything alone, and being constantly engaged in several things (personally and otherwise), the time I have available for writing is actually very limited. So, only after I have finished the Occult part of the next issue will I start accepting promos. Otherwise everything would get too bloody outdated. My other zine, the one I'm doing together with Tadas of LEDO TAKAS, called AD ARMA! will also unleash its long-awaited #3 this coming spring. It's a lot like #2, but perhaps not as thick fucker as that one was. http://www.metalprovider.com/tsf"

LE'RUE DELASHAY (band)

1. "2003 brought forth my lastest classical release 'The law of 8ve's' on Root of all Evil Records, along with the reformation of Theatre of the macabre. We are now currently recording material for 'Manifesting the Sorcerers Lore' which should be due out in the summer of 2004."

2. "2004 will find me putting some finishing touches on the music for an underground art film for Dr. Mangor, the publication of some of my latest essays in various magazines, and also a new Le' rue CD by the end of the year, all provided."

Vgander/HELHEIM (band)

1. "2003 was a good year concerned our release 'Yersinia Pestis'. But concerning live it happened very little. Only a few gigs, which is very unfortunate for us as live is very important. Our album got very good critics in the main press, and we feel that we've gained more and new fans with this album."

2. "Plans for 2004 is to hopefully get another contract with Massacre Records. Our new album will be called 'The journeys and the experiences of death' and will be a concept album, definitely the hardest one to make to date. Hopefully our 2000 MCD 'Helsviti' will be released this year, as a ltd ed. to the new album, or singlehanded. We would like to tour this year, or at least a bunch of festivals. One is already booked, but I'm not allowed to say which one. Apart from that there's no concrete plans."

edA-qa mort-ora-y/Trostlos (label)

1. "A slow but decent year. SHIVA IN EXILE released their first album and digital sales have been good."

2. "We are planning 1 or 2 experimental releases (and we are trying to find really experimental material, not just calling it that). Then we should be starting for film / TV production if everything goes well."

Roberto/AVANTGARDE MUSIC/WOUNDED LOVE (label)/ MONUMENTUM (band)

1. "As good as bad as any other year."

2. "I don't have any expectations, as usual, if not bringing back home my bones every night."

Chris/PULSAR LIGHT (label)

1. "2003 was it's a hard working year, because we have grow as a label and we have to dealed with some good partnership. I remember this year as work , work and work."

2. "I hope that this year is a good year for us we start with good releases, DRACOS HYPNALIS (Melodic Death Metal), STIGMHATE and SUHRIM."

Gerrit Mohr/Century Media (label)/
MOURNING CARESS (band)

1. "A good one... I have lovely private surroundings and I am a free man… business wise we had a good year at CM, although the music industry has seen better days... my own band was way too lazy."

2. "I hope the ones I love (and all the others) will have a healty year 2004. CM will be stronger then ever, so my band will...".

IkonX/xARKANEx (band)

1. "The Year 2003 has been quite a hectic year for me, both on personal and musical side of things. Involving Personal life ,this year has been quite dissapointing and sorrowful in several aspects...On the musical side of things now , xARKANEx released their debut album 'Arcane Elitism' which received noumerous positive reviews and feedback and really got embraced by the followers of Dark Atmospheric Music all over the world which is actually a very encouraging factor to keep me going further and create more!"

2. "xARKANEx are planning to hit the studio quite soon in order to Record their second Opus Which will be entitled 'Enraptured Serene Mesmerism', under the same label THE FOSSIL DUNGEON. This new Album will include 10 hymns of Atmospherical Symphonic Neoclassical Soundtrack-ish Dark Ambient. Check xARKANEx website for details (http//xarkanex.realnoise.net) and email me at xarkanex@hotmail.com"

Emil Saparevski/ CORVUS CORX (label)

1. "2003 was a terrible year in personal aspect, but in the professional field it was more than good. We release our premiere CD-NEST 'Woodsmoke'. The CD receive good reviews in the press and the letters we receive make us happy-the audience like the music of the band, the true, non commercial feeling in it, the atmosphere, sound quality…. Many distributors take the CD, although they were suspicious in the beginning-NEST is coming from Finland while we are from Bulgaria. Strange, huh?

2. "2004 will be better.We are releasing our second CD-KAJNO JESNO SLONCE. In ancient Bulgarian language this means something like a bright shining sun. The music here is atmospheric and epic in the same time… Dark and brings the light of the hope, Acoustic and in the same time contains some synth layers. It has been played on Gaida (Bulgarian bagpipe) and bears the whole sorrow that the heart of the mountain can take. Male orthodox choirs, the sound of the gaida that can make your soul soar; natural noises can be found in this chedeauvre."

Rogier Bos/ COLD BLOOD INDUSTRIES (label)

1. "Some 2003- highlights for us: starting a new sublabel for Atmospheric Gothic Metal (EBONY TEARS), THE MONOLITH DEATHCULT doing 2 European Tours with THE CROWN. We had some really great

releases (THE MONOLITH DEATHCULT, KATAFALK, CRUSTACEAN and more...), although sales could have been better. The fans don't really understand that by downloading and copying music it gets harder and harder for bands and labels to release good stuff. Keep supporting the Metalscene guys!"

2. "Doing a few very good Atmospheric/Gothic Metal releases: THE WOUNDED-'Atlantic' , TO ELYSIUM-'Nightmare's Nest', IMPERIA (with Helena Iren Michaelsen) and NEMESEA (Dutch Gothic metal like AFTER FOREVER/NIGHTWISH/EPICA) to start with. We'll see what comes after that!"

Mass/BLACK WIDOW (label)

1. "2003 was a very succesfull year for BWR, we are very happy especially about some releases like AKRON-'Il tempio di Ferro' (much more Dark and Prog of the first), ANTONIUS REX-'Praternatual' (an unreleased remastered lost album from 80 with a strong occult and dark feeling, MAGIK!). We are also very very proud about the releases of: PENTAGRAM-'A keg full of dynamite' (a live from 78 with 2 guitars), MANILLA ROAD-'Spiral castle'-on vinyl (the best true epic Metal band ever) and to have released, after yeras and years of serching, RIPPER-'and the dead shall rise", on CD and vinyl!!!! During 2003 we worked about some others masterpieces that will see the light during 2004. From other labels around the world in 2003 we like the albums of MARS VOLTA DARKNESS, GAE BOLG, HIDDEN HAND. The best concert we saw during 2003 was AKRON at Hiroshima (Turin), it was a fantastic thearical and spectacular night!"

2. "For 2004 we hope to do better and better! We hope that our bands will play more concerts during this year and I hope you can help them!!!! Our releases for 2004 are: THE BLACK-'Peccatis Nostris/Capistrani Pugnatur'-2 lps-1 CD. These are the best the Black albums vere, very strong, very heavy and doooomy, this band kills!!!! MINOTAURI-Same (this Finnish Doom band is ready to have his debut album! We follow them from years and 2004 is the year of MINOTAURI). PENTAGRAM-'Show'em' how (new album, new lineup, a new killer), BEDEMON-same (unreleased 70's hard-psyck album of ex-PENTAGRAM members with Bobby on vocals. Dedicated to the late Randy Palmer, a gem to discover), L'IMPERO DELLE OMBRE-Same (debut for this Italy new band that mix early DEATH SS and Quatermass+Black Widow. Incredibles!!!) NORTHWINDS-'Chimeres' (third masterpiece for the French Gods), ORNE-Debut album for this Finnish band that we call 'The New Black Widow', PAUL ROLAND-'Strychinine' and other potent poisons (The goth minstrel from UK signed for us and this is the first release of this genius for BWR incl. many covers versions. Goth and Dark), ZESS-This band incl. some of the original member of MALOMBRA and plays a very obscure Heavy Doom Goth like a mix of BLACK SABBATH, PENTAGRAM and CANDLEMASS). There is more... but I want to say too much now, there are some big surprises during 2004!"

Mairtin/ METAL WORKS (magazine)

1. "2003 for me was good, but very, very tiring! We only managed to get one issue of Metalworks on the shelves during the entire year, but it was an enjoyable year, nonetheless! Some great albums came out, most notably from NEGURA BUNGET, FORGOTTEN TOMB, IRON MAIDEN, MELECHESH, MOURNING BELOVETH, SCALD, SEPTIC FLESH, GORGOROTH- one of the best years in recent times, in my opinion! Besides that, I fulfilled a life-long ambition by interviewing Steve Harris backstage at IRON MAIDEN's show in Dublin in December... so look out for that in a future issue!"

2. "Well, the first thing is obviously to put our fourth issue to rest, and to follow it very quickly (within 2-3 months) with the next one. Besides that, I have a great ambition to do two things: to form a new band, as I really miss playing music, and also to return to playing my next passion, rugby! At the moment, though, this seems like a far off dream, as the magazine takes up so much of time, but I'll work something out. My priority will remain will the zine, though, and I'm absolutely determined to release no less than three issues this year."

Tom/SYSTEM SHOCK/KMG (label)

1. "I can't remember what happened in 2003, it's already gone for nearly two weeks, ha, ha."

2. "We have the new MASTER album coming up. Paul Speckmann is re-terrorizing the world of extreme Metal for about 20 years now and the new album is his strongest effort since the glorious 'On The 7th Day God Created... Master' album from the early Nineties. The album will be entitled 'The Spirit Of The West' and comes up with a crushing sound as Paul has been backed up by musicians from the Czech cult Thrashers Shaark. The album features even a metallized 'Ring Of Fire' tribute to the deceased Johnny Cash. MASTER will be promoting the album with an European Tour. They will be supported by Israeli melodic Deathers SALEM who will release their first DVD soon. We are especially happy for SALEM as it is their very first European tour. Afterwards we have the Dutch Death Metal horde XENOMORPH coming up with their second album entitled 'Necrophilia Mon Amour' and they will once again combine the best elements of several styles of musical brutalism."

Moritz Neuner/GRAVEWORM/DARKWELL (band)

1. "The year 2003 was in the musical way very busy - as always - for me. I had a great year to be part as the GRAVEWORM-Crew, on such famous Festivals like WACKEN OPEN AIR (D), SUMMERBREEZE OPEN AIR (D) and METALFEST VIENNA (A) and I surprisely had to help them out since September 2003 behind the drums on several shows in Italy, Germany and Austria. With DARKWELL we started the year 2003 with a headlining Mini-Tour through Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria followed by a cool Support-Tour in Austria before PARADISE LOST! Then we played great Festival-Shows with our new female voice at the WAVE GOTHIC MEETING (D), two Shows at one day at the BULLDOG-Festivals (A) & DARK MOON-Festival (A), the SUMMERBREEZE OPEN AIR (D) and the METAL MERIDIAN-Festival (D). With SIEGFRIED we did the world-LIVE-premiere at the SKELETON BASH-Festival (A) in my hometown. Furthermore I did also the first shows with SHADOWCAST starting with a cool Support-Show in Vienna (A) before CRADLE OF FILTH, as well as a cool headlining Tour through Austria in Mid-June 2003; we also played at the MONSTERS OF DEATH-Festival (A) and at the METAL KOROSKA-Festival (SLOV) and in Spring we did some support-shows at the GREEN CARNATION-Tour in Austria and Germany as well as several single-shows. Furthermore you can hear my drumming on the following CDs from 2003: GOLDEN DAWN, SHADOWCAST and SIEGFRIED."

2. "The next week I will start the Recordings as first for the new DARKWELL CD, coming out in April 2004 followed by several headlining shows through Germany, Austria and hopefully Swiss and the Netherlands. Furthermore there should be a release from a band from the Netherlands for whom I played the drums on their new CD back in Spring 2003, as well as in mid-February the Debut CD of Austrias STERNENSTAUB - www.sternenstaub.org - for whom I recorded the drums back in 2002. As this years new drummer in GRAVEWORM will start hopefully in March the first US-appearance at several shows and festivals followed by a big European Festival-Tour between April and August 2004. In Spring 2004 we'll record the new CD followed by several shows around the world. Furthermore I will play drums on the upcoming studio-sessions from SHADOWCAST, ST.LUCIFER (former ABIGOR), as well as some surprise acts."

Adi Mihailov/BESTIAL (label)

1. "2003 was a good year for us. Even if the number of people dedicated to the underground are smaller every year. We released two albums (in fact debut albums) of MARSYAS and DIN UMBRA. We also re-printed the old albums of GOD ('From the Moldavian Eclesiastic Throne' and 'Sublime'). And we produced a new T-shirt for Negura Bunget (the model 'N Crugu Bradului')."

2. "We have great plans for this year: we want to release the new album of GOD , called 'Aura', and to reprint the old titles of Negura Bunget, ABIGAIL and AVATAR. We also want to build a section of our website for people outside our country (in this moment, www.bestial.ro is designed only for Romanian users)."

Thorsten/ EQUINOXE (label)

1. "2003 was a really good year for our small label. With NEON DREAM and SLYDE we had much success with the releases of two newcomers and are really happy about the really good reviews and reactions we received about them. On the other hand we are a little bit afraid about the fact that sellings of CDs are going down in generall because of illegal downloads and CD copying. Especial for small labels as ours this could become really dangerous."

2. "For 2004 we hope that the people remember to support the artists they love to hear. Also we hope that we could release some more succesfull CDs as in 2003. First of all the new CD of German Gothic heroes THE HOUSE OF USHER. And last but not least we hope that our new sub-label e-noxe specialized on the electronic way of music will be a success, too."

Samantha/VIRGIN BLACK (band)

1. "2003 was a busy year for us. We released our second full-length album 'Elegant... and dying' through Massacre Records in Europe and The End Records in the U.S. The album has received much praise from critics (eg. 15/15 Legacy; 9/10 Orkus).

May 2003 saw us leaving the shores of Australia and flying to the U.S. to do a West Coast tour with ANTIMATTER (Duncan Patterson, x-ANATHEMA) and AGALLOCH. After America, we then went to Germany to perform at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen festival in Leipzig. The response was incredible, even better than what we could have imagined."

2. "Our main focus now is writing. We plan to begin recording the next release mid-way trhough 2004, and it promises to be an even bigger project; something very different. It is highly probable that we will return to Germany again this year to play a few 'special' shows, but this hasn't been confirmed. It is a difficult task for a band coming from Australia; but it has been an exciting time for us."

Mark Riddick/The Fossil Dungeon (label)

1. "2003 was a successful year for The Fossil Dungeon, a label owned and operated by members of the neo-medieval group THE SOIL BLEEDS BLACK. We published seven releases in 2003: THE SOIL BLEEDS BLACK-'Mirror of the Middle Ages' CD, MEPHISTO WALZ-'Nightingale' CD/7"EP, BUTTERFLY MESSIAH-'Eternal' CD, DAWN DESIREE-'Dancing, Dreaming, Longing...' CD, MIRABILIS s/t 7" EP, The Fossil Dungeon Program.02 compilation CD-R."

2. "Plans already set for 2004 include: DARK MUSE-'Ghosts in the Ethereal Garden' 2xCD, CHIRLEISON-'A Whisper' CD, HEXENTANZ-'Nekrocrafte', CD, Mythos of the Mediterranean 2x7" compilation."

Tyko/ TENHI (band)

2. "Next full-lenght album will be recorded this spring/summer and hopefully released next autumn. Also plans to make a music video for some song from that album. Moreover rumour about a small european tour this spring, but we will see what happens. Anyway the spring is going to be very hectic."

Alex Kurtagic/ BENIGHTED LEAMS (band)/SUPERNAL MUSIC (label)

1. "I personally have never liked years or ages ending in 3. However, during 2003 we put out three excellent releases: HATE FOREST's 'Purity' CD, DRUDKH's 'Forgotten Legends' CD, and THE MEADS OF ASPHODEL 'Exhuming the Grave of Yeshua' CD; the latter was album of the month in Terrorizer and gained accolades in the commercial press, even though we are a tiny underground label and never been into that sort of hype. We also started producing merchandise, both band-associated and 'ideological': With our 'Anti-Human' mugs we transformed the mundane drinking of tea into an anti-social statement, and an expression of disgust for the human race; we also launched HATE FOREST 'Scythia' polo shirts - radical fashion for the radical Europhile. The foundations were laid for the offensive of 2004."

2. "2004 began in earnest: our woozy heads had not yet fully recovered from all the champagne, and my neighbour's dog had not yet claimed its turkey carcass, when HATE FOREST sent us a rare email to inform us of their intention to record three albums this year. Three albums! These are, if we understood correctly: two HATE FOREST full-lengths, one of them being an ambient-style recording like 'The Gates', and a third DRUDKH full-length. It looks, therefore, as if this is going to be a busy and very energetic year – not least because we are in the process of adding new bands to our roster, which we will announce later. Available now are

our HATE FOREST polo shirts, which come in four different sizes (although, by the time of writing, we have already sold out of the smallest size until the next re-print). Visit our webstore for details and image. They look and feel great, and, to my knowledge, they are the first and only (radical) Black Metal polos ever made. Beyond this our genius brains are working on additional merchandise ideas-consumable agitprop to break the mold and terrorise the Marxist plague! Feminazis, humanists, Christian Socialists, cosmopolitanists, cultural saboteurs, hippies, trendy airheads, TV-addicts, and peecee terrorists: beware. No update is complete without hammering down once again a recapitulation of our confirmed forthcoming releases, to with: CAPRICORNUS' 'Alone Against All' CD (March), HATE FOREST 'Battlefields"CD (May), INFERUM '...Taur-Nu-Fuin...' CD (t.b.a.), HATE FOREST 'Scythia' re-issue cd (t.b.a.), HATE FOREST 'Blood & Fire / Ritual + bonus' CD (t.b.a. - new addition!), MAYHEM 'Out from the Dark' shape picture disc (t.b.a.), and BEWITCHED 'Hibernum in Perpetuum' re-issue cd. Memorise it."

JF/GURKKHAS (band)/ DEADSUN (label)

1. "The 2003 year wasok, in fact it has been grat in terms of the qualities of the bands we have signed, but not so good in sells i would say. the market has been down during several months and our sells have suffered. Anyway, this has not stopped us in our progressiona nd we have now a lot of great bands in our camp!! I would like more people to have a look at our compnay,we have fuc'in bands and a new website to discover them via MP3, videos!!"
2. "We hope to grow and grow in good size to be abble to help more and more our band. We thanks all people who believe in us and fuck the others!"

Martin Schindler/ MANTUS (band)

1. "The year 2003 was a good year for MANTUS and Black Heaven. We released "Weg ins Paradies", the full time album of MANTUS, and the "end of the world" E.P. of Black Heaven with new songs, Remixes of older songs and a coverversion of "Puppets" by Depeche Mode. Both releases were successful and the reactions we got of the magazines and fans were very positive. But there were also lots of unpleasant things in 2003, for example the Irak war and George W. Bush and the terror in too many countries because of religion or territory..."
2. "I think the year 2004 will become very successful and extraordinary for my projects. With MANTUS we have finished the recordings of our new Single and Album. In May we will release the single 'Keine Liebe' as a limited edition together with a DVD Single. The DVD Single contains the videos 'Keine Liebe' and some older MANTUS songs. Probably the album called 'Ein Hauch von Wirklichkeit" we will release in August, also in a limited edition with a CD containing only piano versions of some songs of the album. The CD will be released under TRISOL, because we made a new contract for 2 fulltime albums. Everything is very costly produced and I hope the people will like it. At the moment I'm working on new Black Heaven songs and I already have some ideas for a great release. But concrete there is nothing planned for the next future."

Patrick/CALLENISH CIRCLE (band)

1. "The year 2003 was pretty good for us. We released our 4th album 'My Passion//Your Pain' on Metal Blade Records. The album got atremendous response worldwide. Furthermore we did a nice Benelux-mini-tour with Dismember, some cool summerfestivals (Wacken Open Air & Summer Breeze) and in October we did a full European tour with Exodus & Nuclear Assault among others."
2. "Upcoming year we will hopefully play some more festivals and mini-tours but first we need to find a replacement for our drummer Gavin, cause he will not be available after February to play with us live. So at the moment we are looking out for a session-drummer that can help us out the rest of the year. Furthermore there are plans to re-release all our pre-Metal Blade Records material on a 2-CD though Karmageddon Media. That means the Lovelorn-demo ('95), our debut-album Drift of Empathy ('96), the Escape MCD ('98) and our 2nd album Graceful... yet Forbidding ('99). Last but not least we will start writing new material for our 5th album that we plan to record early 2005."

Guido Heijnens/KARMAGEDDON MEDIA (label)

1. "2003 was a very hard year with too many people in our way. I rather forget this year, although music wise we did release some killer albums for sure! I get very annoyed by now by all those shitheads who know everything better, but probably spend their day with downloading and wanking! Music might be on dying path... let's hope 2004 is different."
2. "Release good albums, support our bands and enjoy the music!"

Adi Ilie/hmm.ro (site)

1. "2003 was pretty bust, with a lot of work, some major dissapointments but also a lot of achievements. No great deal of artistic or musical discoveryies (I must say that no new album impressed me, but only a bunch of DVDs) but I thnink that some inner evolution took place, as a result of several contact with some persons."
2. "I'd like to continue on the way that we are and to be able to improve ourselves, to step further and to make more money."

Daniel Dorobantu/THY VEILS (band)/ PENDUL (site)

1. "One of the greatest. Thy Veils signed a contract for a DVD release and 'The Diaphanous Depressions' album got worldwide distribution and great reviews."
2. "Releasing a new studio album (the 5th, entitled 'The Call') and starting to perform live."

Athelstan/ANGELSIC (label)/ FOREFATHER (band)

1. "2003 started well with the successful release of the debut SYMBEL CD 'We drink-hymns and counsel of anglo-saxon heathenry', and now this limited release is almost sold out. Since then Sceott (of SYMBEL) has gone on to release the debut CDR of his other project BRETWALDAS OF HEATHEN DOOM, on his own label King Penda Productions, featuring accomplice Dagfari Wartooth. He has also release the 2001 SYMBEL demo on cassette. Other labels have expressed interest in releasing SYMBEL material, so the future is looking bright for this heathen metal monolith. On the FOREFATHER front, towards the later end of 2003 we have been recording and mixing the 4th album to be titled 'Ours Is The Kingdom', which will be released on Karmageddon Media (Hammerheart) in early-mid 2004. Karmageddon will also be re-releasing all the other FOREFATHER albums in conjunction with the new album. They will feature in digipak form with extended artwork and 2 bonus tracks on each album. Mixing for these extra tracks is currently being finalised. We are very much looking forward to our time with Karmageddon, and can't wait to release this album which has been in our heads for far too long. The artwork will again be done by Chrille Anderson, and of this work he says it's his best ever! The album features 12 tracks of varying pace, from insanely fast to melancholic and slow, with some extremely memorable tunes. We definitely feel it's our best album to date."
2. "Regarding the label plans for 2004, we hope to continue with our increasingly successfuly mail order service and release some new SYMBEL material which is in the making. At some point we would like to do a vinyl release as well. Catch up with news and find links to FOREFATHER and SYMBEL at: http://members.aol.com/AngeliscE."

Lenti Chiriac/ HMM (magazine)/ Romania Radio

1. "I can say it was O.K. For me, except the radio & TV shows and also the Heavy Metal Magazine, the most important subject was the Rock Am Ring Festival in Germany. At this festival I have make interviews with Metallica and Marylin Manson. Meantime, it was the year in which Heavy Metal Magazine was choose one of the media partners for the Wacken Open Air festival in 2004."
2. "This year Heavy Metal Magazine will celebrate 10 years of existence. Maybe, it will be a party and I will organize an concert. Hope to get more radio shows at the national romanian broadcasting corporation and to put more rock videos on MTV Romania during the whole day."

FLOODLAND (band)

1. <mr.smiss>
"I think 2003 was a little bit difficult for the band. The year before we made great efforts to create a good album, 'Decay', which was the best thing we ever made up to that moment. At least in our opinion. Well, the album got very good reviews from the press, but nevertheless it did not succeed as well as our earlier work 'Ocean of the lost' from 2000. First of all that was the fault of the CD press company, who had a bad delay and supplied our album long after the reviews and ads in the magazines. But besides we got some existental doubts about our approach to music, although we knew that 'Decay' was quite a professional work. So in spring 2003 we started to work on some new material, and we tried a new way of composition and texting. We thought we would have a new concept of music then. But instead we got somehow confused with the new stuff, the process grew slower and slower and none of us was ever satisfied with anything we did that time. There was very much talk, much of 'thinking it over', but it did not exactly lead us anywhere. In early summer 2003 we all felt musically worn out, disappointed with the poor outcome of the sessions and unsure whether we were on the right way. So we decided to timeout FLOODLAND and have a break until the end of the year. The idea was to have six months of real thinking, cooling down and get some distance to the latest facts. I had a feeling about this like it would get us to a final situation in one of two options: either we will meet again half a year later with the want to proceed with floodland, or we will split the band and declare the whole thing finished. Guessing the future of the band was a hardly satisfying situation, but on the other hand there were our families who enjoyed the break very much. I realized in those six months, how much of my children's development I was missing all the years! But to all the fans - there's no need for sadness: all of the Floodlanders started to miss it very soon: the stage, the rehearsals, the studio - and the fun ...! Not long after the summer we met again and restarted the discussion. The break would last until december, but we'd have a meeting after new year and check out what was left of FLOODLAND in each of our hearts..."
<burn:hard>
"As far as for my part there was sure much left in my heart, but there was another part that grew stronger and stronger and that was the idea of a solo album... So that input of taking a half year´s break was very much mine... First of all I didn´t feel well at all, because things like the money (missing) and such shit were getting more and more important instead of the musical development... And second there are some discussions about the future musical style, whether we should stay 'true' Gothic with modern influences like samples and sequencers, or if we should search for a more futuristic and at the same moment maybe more commercial approach... At that point I felt the urge to beg the band for a break to work on was in my head, but not reserved for the band, musicwise... Nowadays I miss to play live very much, and I miss the regular rehearsing with my second 'family'... So there is no doubt for me that we will fight for FLOODLAND and work on the new album again very soon ..."
2. <mr.smiss>
"That meeting for new directions to FLOODLAND took place in the first week of January 2004 in one of our favourite clubs. There is not too much to say about it - we are going to start the thing again! There will be some new circumstances for the music, but it will be something similar to the old FLOODLAND stuff. We will work on more new material, perhaps pick up some of last year's ideas and recycle them and put all that onto the stage. We plan to do the new stuff as live songs which work in the studio as well. So maybe less electronics than on the last two records - or maybe less automatic machines and more live stage work. If we want, there could still be loads of electronics in it... Last year's break is not definitely over by now, because the band got a little lesser importance to its members in the last months. But I think we are on the way back into music and this year will see a new bloom of FLOODLAND. Maybe the rosebud will not open this year, maybe only in 2005. That is OK for me, if the music needs the time. We are not in a hurry."
<burn:hard>
"There is not much to add, as far as we are looking for a new rehearsal room now, which we will maybe adjust to loud music on our own *ggg*... We hope that all our fans out there on this planet haven´t forgot us and are still waiting impatiently on the next FLOODLAND album... it will come on the market as soon as we can manage (I can blab out that it will deal with our home town Vienna)... And of course there are some requests for the band to play live again, not only in Austria, but also in Hungary and the Czech Republic... So hopefully

these wishes will come true very soon, too..."

Michele Giorgi/ Code666 (label)

1. "2003 was an incredibly active year for code666, started with big names like ABORYM and NEGURA BUNGET, the bands represented two completely different ways to approach extreme sound: innovative, technology driven and futurists ABORYM; ancient, pagan and obscure NEGURA BUNGET. Along with them we had the double cd sampler 'Better undead than alive', a double CD featuring all the bands in our roster and many extras, like video tracks, interactive and a contest. This Compilation led into a new concept, not only a sampler to check the bands, but a complete sound track witha proper life and a common feeling linking the music. Than we had MANES and KONKHRA, another big pair. The masters of Death-Thrash witht heir best album since a while. A pure hammer to crash listeners into an endless headbanging. Beside we had MANES, a completely renewed band that produced one of my favs in the whole musical scene for 2003: electronic, trip hop, metal, post-rock, whatelse? All took part in this unique album for a great personal result. In the same period we launched our sublabels Dreamcell11 and GoreGore with their releases DISMAL (for Dreamcel11) and a three way split CD with the leading Italian brutal bands (on GoreGore). The year ended with three incredible proposals: ATROX, UNMOORED and HANDFUL OF HATE. Three bands with distant personalities but all of them ahead in the respective scenes. As usual Code666 presented the whole extreme metal landscape, from technical Death/Black to avantgarde schizo-metal to pure carnal black. I think we had a great year with some of our best releases so far, so no way to complain about a so brilliant period. We also launched our new website, a great webstore and the label forum, all along our way to reach the highest degree in professional attitude. During the last months, Davide Tiso from EPHEL DUATH decided to open his own label into most interesting and weird tendencies for avantgarde/contaminated metal and founded Amaranth recordings. We are all waiting to hear what this great artist will be able to discover and release in the next months. The year ended with the birth of a main label to support and cohordinate our work: Aural Music will be our base and our mothership while continuing to act also under the glorous old flags."
2. "2004 will be even more exciting, with all the different projects going on under the Aural Music flag. We will have new releases from every label acting under this mark so it will be a year full of releases. As for code666 we will have in the first part of the year CARINOU (from the former PUISSANCE mastermind), ENID, VOID OF SILENCE, then DIABOLICUM, AGHORA, THEE MALDOR KOLLECTIVE... So much good music I can barely remember. Add that Aural will have it's first own band: Mechanical Poets releasing their album after the Summer. But you will have to discover all the treasure we are preparing little by little."

Alex Brandusesc/THE BEAUTY OF PAIN (label)

1. "What can I say about 2003? Only few words of what I left behind. I released the first VOKODLOK CD but unfortunately everything stopped there. I wish I had produced some other cds and even sign some bands from abroad but due to the fact that in room the music industry is not working properly this couldn't be possible. Concerning the distribution, little by little it begins to work as it should do."
2. "For 2004 I hope there will be more releases and I am already planning two certainties: DIVINE MUZAK and GRIMEGOD. I'm not giving up the idea of releasing some foreign bands and I want to use this opportunity to ask the bands to send their demos for a possible deal."

Giuliano/ENSOPH (band)

1. "2003 has been an important year in the life of Ensoph. We had recorded our second full-lenght album 'Opus Dementiae', we had played some important gigs with bands like Killing Miranda, Novembre, Mortuary Drape, Ephel Duath and Cinema Strange (just to name a few), and we had finally found a really good deal with Cruz Del Sur, that believes in us and in our music. We don't want to remember the bad times, just the positive ones."
2. "Great gigs & tons of promotion! About concerts we have planned a mini italian tour with our friend Novembre and the great Asterius from Germany, but we are planning a great number of gigs in north italy to improve our live experience. We are also working for some european dates (we are interested especially in great German events like the legendary Wave Gothic Treffen). Our new site is still under construction; we have some special surprise in it for our net-fanatics fans, like videos and inedite tracks.The main events in 2004 will be without doubt the coming out of our new album. Be sure that 'Opus Dementiae' will change your way to think about extreme music..."

Andy/ WINDS/AGE OF SILENCE (bands)

1. "2003 was a great year for me both musically and on a personal level. We recorded everything for the Winds album except for the drums (which were recorded the year before) and I also had some great experiences in the studio during the production, where we managed to work very well together as a team, with more members in the band present at the same time during the recordings than what we've done before. On a personal level I quit my part time job over the summer and I'm now doing the music more or less full time, and I've also gone from living in a small apartment in the city to a nice house in the countryside. 2003 was a great year."
2. "For 2004 I have many things going on. Carl and I mixed the new Winds album in Vancouver, Canada in early January, and I got to meet and work with some fine people in the industry who have previously worked with the likes of Metallica, Fear Factory and other multi million selling bands. That was a lot of fun and a great learning experience. I'm also busy right now tracking the synth for Age of Silence. That will probably take me until the end of March and then we will mix that album in April. I also participated on two tracks playing mellotron for a band called Subterranean Masquerade earlier this month. I hope to finish my solo album this year and I will surely write some more Winds material for the fourth album. My soloalbum is quite unfinished yet so I only have limited information available. What I do know is that it's most likely going to be an EP, with probably 4 songs. The material so far is all written by me for guitar, I've recorded some ideas on acoustic and clean electric. I also plan to do piano and some orchestration to add to it. Jan Axel will do the drums, although not in a similar fashion as we're used to from Winds. It's going to be a quite mellow album with some progressive and intricate melodies here and there. I'm also working on vocal ideas and I'm unsure whether I'm going to perform them myself or whether I'm going to get some different people to do it. Nothing is for sure at this point but I'm going to finish this as soon as I have the time."

Oyvind/FRANTIC BLEEP (band)

1. "2003 was indeed a very good year for Frantic Bleep. Our main goal for the year was to (hopefully) get signed with a good record-label. We released our demo 'Fluctuadmission' in November 2002 and we spend a lot of time to promote the band around the world. We received positive feedback from 4 labels, and we ended up receiving offers from 2 of these. We had been in contact with Lee Barrett of Elitist/Earache since late 2002, and we ended up getting an offer from Earache in the spring 2003. We felt really honoured that a person like Lee Barrett showed so much faith in us, since he also has signed bands like Emperor and Opeth in the past, and obviously has a great ear for talent. At the same time we also received an offer from Andreas Katsambas and The End Records. At first we hoped to be able to sign for both labels so they could work more effectively in their own territory (USA and Europe), but since Earache has an office in the US we didn't think Earache would say yes to this. The Earache contract was a very big standard contract (40+ pages) and we didn't want to spend the next six months negotiating with them, so we turned the offer down and signed a 3 album deal with The End. The deal we have with The End is very loose and there's no traps or unfair demands in it. Lee Barrett later asked Earache to get a licence from The End so they could release the album in Europe, and they said yes. This is the first time Earache have said yes to licence an album so we are quite happy about that. We also spend the year writing music for the upcoming album. We started briefly to write in January 2003. In February/March Patrick and Paul went away on tour with Madder Mortem supporting Opeth, and we basically wrote the whole album the months after the tour had ended. In June/July our old drummer Karl Arthur Renstrøm left the band and we replaced him with Stein Erik Svendheim, a very talented drummer from our town. We clicked immediately at the first rehearsal, and I must say that he's perfect for the band. We also started to record the debut album in October/November. We are still working on the album as I write this (February 2004)."
2. "We hope that 2004 will be an even better year than 2003. As mentioned, we are still working on the debut album. When we are recording an album we want it to be as good as possible (we're a bunch of perfectionists). We are done with the basic recordings, and we'll hopefully finish the bass and some additional overdubs soon, but the vocals will take some more time to finish. We are currently working with a new singer (Mr Kjetil Fosseid) which has worked out great so far. It takes some time to work out the melodies and adapting them to the music. The new songs are heavier than most of the songs on the demo. Maybe not as extreme, but the songs are more based on groove, melody, feeling, dynamics and experimentation. We hope to finish the recordings around March/April 2004. We also hope to be able to do some live shows after the album is out. Since Paul Mozart Bjørke (bass, Vocals) only is working with us in the studio, we might need a session bass player for live situations. I don't think we'll be able to do any major touring after the debut album, but we hope to be able to do some shows in Norway at least, since the new songs sounds really good live. We'll also start working on new material when we finish the recordings. We have a lot of material lying around as well, so we hope to release the second album in 2005."

Jan Transit/KARMAKOSMETIX (label)/ex-IN THE WOODS... (band)

1. "I got to release the two first attempts on my new label, karmakosmetix, which have sold pretty well. Besides this, I've gained lots of experience on a personal level, related to jobs etc etc. I've started drumming in a band which is an old dream of mine. We' re called Black Bone Chapel, and there will be at least a 7" released this year."
2. "Wanna have more releases out on kkx + finally start to record an album on my own, yeah!"

Roy Kristensen/Imhotep (magazine/webzine)

1. "Well, frankly speaking it's not much to tell you. I released Imhotep #9, did less interviews and reviews than I would like to do and I listened well to metal as usual. This may sound like a big thing, but I have had less motivation than ever, worked way toooo much and got less inspired. Though, I must admit that if I have had the necessary money Imhotep would turn into something big because we got major distribution in Norway, Finland and Sweden. But, as said, I lost inspiration. On the good side I have slowly but safely become involved in love towards the end of the year. So, things are getting better..."
2. "2004, a fine year... and better. Fact is, the web-page is getting better all the time. I have found motivation once again, I listen to Metal all the time and I have begun to do more and more reviews and interviews again. Imhotep #10 'On-Line' is developing all the time and now I'm getting more and more ready to begin working with Imhotep #11. We are 14 contributors and I in Imhotep now, and I think the future is there for us. In other worlds, we're ready for World Domination. Imhotep will not only be a pure Metal magazine, as a few of us also love music that is not Metal, and we're mainly speaking Progressive Rock in here. In addition I hope we will also strive for development in Imhotep. In the end Imhotep will become every metallers wet dream. So, everything looks better now. It's Spring and soon the Inferno-Metal festival is upon us. What can be better than an infernal Easter? Eh, maybe a black Christmas..."

Andreas/THE END (label)

1. "This was the year we have expanded our mail-order and our distribution labels for the USA. We were able to release some really big names inlcuding The Gathering, Marduk, Enslaved, In The Woods, etc. We also had the first all The End USA tour with Agalloch, Virgin Black and Antimatter. So overall a busy but very satisfying year."
2. "The goal this year is to concentrate mostly on the label and really stand behind our big priorities. We will have the new Winds, our recent signing Crisis, plus help develop new but talented bands like Subterranean Masquerade, Age Of Silence and Frantic Bleep. Our main goal is to continue releasing albums that stand out of the norm and offer a unique and often challenging sound. Also, a goal is to slowly expand back to Europe and set a presense there."

Manes

Everybody wants to find as many as possible in an interview with a band and that is the reason why usually even the very first lines start from the chosen logo. In this very case, the word "Manes" has much significance in many languages. Well, Cern (guitars, electronics, programming, sequencing), the band's leader says that this word represents actually a prophet from a religious sect (Manichaeismus), who lived around year 300. The sect used to deal with the conflict between light and darkness or to be precise with the invasion of darkness into the realm of light. In Latin, the term might have as a euphemistic significance "souls of the deceased" worshipped as divinities. Dis Manibus formula is often met engraved on sepulchers with the meaning of "dedicated to the MANES-gods"! In a metaphorical view, this term could suggest as well both "underworld" and "realm of death". Most certainly, Cern, alias Tor-Helge Skei, had desired for this title to have a connotation related to dark, Cold, infernal...



Tell me, Cernunnus, am I wrong? And it all happened 11 years ago… How do you see now "the old times"?

"You are right. The Latin meaning was the main reason for choosing the MANES name. Later I found a lot of different meanings. In some Eastern European language it means something like menstruation blood or pus... another cool meaning, hehe... The name stuck, even if the music has changed over the years, perhaps because I like the word, and it kind of describes my average mood and interests?!"

Torstein: "And why rename MANES? In my ears it's still cold, dark and infernal, but more so at heart than in the use of a distinct set of distortion presets and vocals."

If I correctly recall, at that time, you used to perform in ATROX. I assume you invested in some equipment and then decided to explore a new territory throughout this very project. You also had the intention to play in PERIFA, yet you finally decided to go on with MANES solely, especially after you met Sargatanas. Do you think there might be something I forgot to mention about the beginning of this project?

"I played for a very short time in Perifa, but that was at a time where I began to lose interest in the traditional band concept, rehearsals, live, etc… So it didn't last too long, but at least I got Sargatanas to join MANES.. Also, the old MANES was not to be a social activity..."

Torstein: "I think both of you forgot to mention Suffocation hehe… Suffocation started back in '88 I believe, and was the name of ATROX before they changed name – for obvious reasons."

In 3 years you've released 3 demos that didn't go just unnoticed, on contrary, since 2 of them were later re-printed on CD. Thanks to those materials, MANES earned the status of a cult band. Don't you find slightly "out of line" this very characterization as long as you practically were completely unknown and your materials were sold relatively less in number? Tell me something about the 3 demos-sound, lyrics, feed back, etc

"The demos were not really released to spread the name, but as some kind of test recordings for ourselves. We didn't actively spread those tapes that much, but got a lot of help from the tape trader scene. In some ways, some people found these demos attractive and interesting, so they spread those for us... It was all very black metal back then, fortunately, some barriers and borders have been torn down now..."

Torstein: "When taking about cult-status you have to consider that such a thing is completely outside the actual band and music. As for earning such a status, that's not a general thing. A cult-following is something that describes a small group of dedicated followers not a scene as a whole – and it's not something a band can control or influence, so I feel the first part of your question is quite a paradox…."

I remember that, by that time, there were rumors that MANES had signed a contract with Moribund for 2 CDs and an EP. What happened? What went wrong?

"The main reason for this deal to go wrong was my physical condition back then. My condition (I have colitis ulcerosa) got extremely bad, and I was hospitalized for a few years, removed most of the intestines, medications, etc... This didn't really motivate me to do any musical stuff. Both me, and probably everybody else thought that there would be no more Cernunnus, and no more MANES, so all contacts with everybody got lost. After some years, I got better, and MANES continued. Things were different, so this was the start of phase #2 really, meaning there were no obligations, no history... only forward…"

An absolutely remarkable thing was that, on an extreme Metal backbone (many rushed in labeling as Norwegian Black Metal) you actually build an innovative sound and I might even define it as well as "weird" with quite haunting keyboards and bewitching vocals. In the same manner was also the debut album, the one released at Hammerheart. What can you tell me about that material? What about the feed back and the sells?

"I don't know any sales figures, as I'm not that good at doing paper work, administration or economics... a few thousands..."

Torstein: "The debut album consisted of re-recordings of different tracks from the 3 demos."

If we think about, the album was released in 1999 but the music belonged to many years back……I know you had many offers, at that time, either from NAP or Avantgarde or elsewhere. What might have determined you to choose for the Dutch label?

"There were a few concrete offers, and some interest... But, as I already said, I'm not on negotiation so I kind of just signed on the first paper that dumped into my mailbox, and it happened to be Hammerheart... I think... he, he…"

I have also heard some rumors connected with major troubles with your healthy that you had to face, both physically and psychically.

"Yes, my physical health is fucking ridiculous, the body is ripped apart and it is just about able to work and survive. I feel completely crippled physically, and this of course affects me psychically... I'm a wreck in all ways you can look at it... I just have to live with it. It makes me think and appreciate things a little bit differently, but, such is life... I think... he, he…"

Well that was almost all about past or, to be more precise, the first chapter of MANES existence, a chapter rather veiled by inactivity, maybe lack of inspiration and perhaps lack of motivation…and it happened that Sargatanas also left the band. Well once he left, the sound has radically changed…in fact the whole concept has been "modified". Should I drop the conclusion he might have been a kind of brake that didn't let MANES evolve? Correct me if I am wrong… Why did he leave, anyway?

"Sargatanas left because he weren't interested in the traditional band concept. He was involved in phase #2, but not in phase #3... We had a few rehearsals with some different people, and he found that this was nothing for him... Nothing serious..."

Torstein: "Sargatanas leaving MANES had nothing to do with the evolution of the band on a musical level – more so when it comes to band activity. The last songs written for the debut album is dated back to '95, and the evolution has had a steady pace ever since…"

The official statement regarding the break up with Hammerheart sounds rather too diplomatic: both our directions and ideologies were different; we kept the terms for our promise and contract and so did they for a single album, as we initially agreed, bla, bla… On the other hand, your assertion is categorical: Emi &co represents ambitious professional and open minded persons, absolutely not limited or else. Should I understand that Hammerheart failed to understand and accept your new orientation? Nevertheless, the Dutch label is definitely bigger than Code666, so don't you think the investment in promotion would have been more substantial than in the case of the Italian label?

"No, Hammerheart didn't really fail. They were interested in the Black MANES, I was not interested in that MANES anymore, and so, didn't do any promotion, or anything, nothing at all really... I had already left the (still floating) ship... Swosh, really.... Promotion and investment is for them…for the guys.... My, or our, interest is in the music creation side of the business. Let the money people do everything else."

Torstein: "I guess there wasn't much active communication between HHR and MANES, so the contract with them just ended and neither HHR nor MANES did anything to stop it. Nothing more spectacular than that! Then, after a while, MANES started rehearsing again, without focus on any particular release nor bound by any sort of contract - but more so for the jamming and the experimentation."

I'd say that from the moment you signed with Code666, MANES has shown a completely new approach as far as music, attitude and line up are regarded. The Italian label declares your style as Neo Avant Metal. Frankly, I find hard to believe MANES could be ever framed in a way or another, to a style or another. Without making a polemic here, don't you find this description rather exaggerated if not somehow limiting?

"I kind of agree with you. The style description is something Code666 came up with, for marketing and promotional purposes, probably. This is something I don't like to partake in, so, let them do whatever they think is necessary... he he..."

Torstein: "First of all; Code666 has nothing to do with how we sound at all, but that's not something I need to explain, right? And another thing; such descriptions like that 'Neo Avant Metal' thing just sounds rather silly to me, but as Cern said – let Code666 do whatever they feel they need to do to make money. That is what they do: marketing, promo etc. – pushing music."

If it was up to me, I would say that the actual MANES sound could correspond to: Melancholic Pop with electronic elements, distorted guitars, trip-hop shades (reminding me of Garm/ULVER), gothic pop Rock in new Katatonia style and PORTISHEAD, RADIOHEAD, APHEX TWIN, MASSIVE ATTACK echoes featuring trance techno effects and shy hues of GGFH (Industrial). What do you say? Is it my range of related styles a little overreacted? Can we say, in a joking way, that all in all it is about a Zombie Metal, he, he?

"You have a good, wide selection of styles there… Zombie Metal… brains, BRAINES."

Torstein: "I think of bands like Necrophagia etc when you say Zombie Metal – or White Zombie for that matter… How about Popcore or Black Hop or something…"

I must confess… Vilosophe left me speechless! It is an excellent avant-garde album, well structured dimensioned and performed. Congratulations! Tell me how was the feed back? I assume that those angry genuine Black Metal fans definitely had some critiques to bring up for this new Dance orientation, right? I believe you would rather gather fans from other stylistic camps (if not already!), which definitely must be more "domestic" and nonconformist. ULVER, for example, expresses no interest for the traditional Nordic Black Metal fans.

"Actually, we have heard very little from the old school Black Metal scene, probably because they didn't like it, except from those that think that what they think is really important... Seems like a very varied (and small) selection of people appreciated Vilosophe for what it is, instead of what they hoped it would be... But fortunately there is more and more cross-breeding between different styles, more musical hybrids and bastards..."

Taking in account your new musical approach, I wouldn't be surprised if you criticized Black Metal scene. SATYRICON or DIMMU BORGIR seem to be for you solely some banal and with no verticality bands. Don't you think you gather many enemies simply declaring such? Is it still the fashion that rules the market and not only… Nuclear Blast or EMI actually earn good money upon so called True Black Metal spirit…

"We don't care if we get enemies... I should be able to tell people what I personally think, shouldn't I? And being politically correct is not something for MANES... Is my

opinion about things so important, that people are getting upset if I say or mean something wrong? Don't (didn't?) think so..."

Torstein: "It's nothing personal – just honest concern: the whole Black Metal genre is completely watered out in terms of music, compared to what it used to be of course. And on another level: Black Metal has become its worst enemy in terms of commercial consumer marketing. A few bands and individuals still cling to their swords, but in my ears (and eyes) it's a lost cause. And it is truly a shame."

Oddly, more or less so, even THE KOVENANT contests Satyr's attitude regarding Black Metal. What do you think about THE KOVENANT' sound? They are pretty criticized but it is their merit to have "smashed" the common Black Metal pattern importing new influences. Could people be that conservative or limited? Does any change always scare? (Musically speaking and not only I would appreciate a frank opinion of yours)

"Strange as it may seem, I have never heard the Kovenant... I heard their earliest stuff, and didn't like it. Haven't been listening to what they were doing after that… I heard they were along the lines of Rammstein?!"

Torstein: "I wouldn't call Kovenant Metal at all anymore… And I don't like their music. It's like the budget version of bands like NIN and Ministry (which I like) – along the lines of Deathstarts from Sweden. Not my cup of blood at all… But let them do what the Hell they want to do."

Let us speak a little about the new line up. Asgeir Hatlen is your vocal and his voice's inflections actually prove good pop Rock aptitudes. And I find it normal as long as he plays as well in MASON or PROJECT GODDOG. What can you tell me about him? What kind of person is he related to you, for example? Does he sympathize with Metal trend?

"He isn't into Metal at all, not that much Rock either, I think. I don't have much contact with him, except for rehearsals and recordings."

Torstein: "Yeah, he's totally indifferent to everything related to metal. I think he's into some rock stuff like A Perfect Circle and Tool, but that's about as close as you come…"

In order to achieve a complete harmony, you asked for Tommy Sebastian's help, well known from GRIFFIN. Well, having such a Heavy voice, I must say that vocal section simply is amazing. Where from the idea of bringing him? And after all, why he? Couldn't Asgeir face the challenge by himself?

"To create a contrast, a difference."

Torstein: "Tommy Sebastian only sang for Griffin on their two first albums. Now he's in some other Rock/Punk kind of band, I think… We know him well, and we thought his vocal-style would fit with some of our stuff, so that's why he's on Vilosophe, I guess. He's got cool vocals…"

You might find it strange, but I must confess that the vocals remind me of Ozzy. If it was to be guided by impressions only, I would say there are some parts that lead even to David Bowie, Rob Smith (THE CURE) or… Justin Timberlake. Am I experiencing a trance or this could be true? Has anyone noticed that before? Tell me what you think…about such?

"We've heard those Ozzy and Bowie comparisons before, and I understand, I think, why..."

Eivind Fjoselde is your guitar player but in the same time he plays along Cern in ATROX. What can you tell me about him?

"I don't play in ATROX! He and Torstein are probably the ones that push MANES towards the Metal spectrum..."

Torstein: "Eiving von Fjøselheisenburg is a poppers-junkie. That's all you need to know. And another thing: I wouldn't say that I personally push MANES towards metal at all, although I guess it's only Eivind and me that (still) listen to metal in MANES. But, however, none of us listen only to Metal."

Rune Hoemsnes is already a celebrity for the drums in THE 3RD AND THE MORTAL. Could it be the fact he is from Trondheim as well? His drums are simply chaotic, without rhythm or synchronism… but absolutely fascinating…

"His drumming combines with the programmed stuff extremely well."

Torstein: "Our celebrity drummer Rune is very skilled and has a very organic and jazzy approach in his drumming - which is cool. He's from Trondheim too, yeah, and Trondheim isn't exactly a metropolis in a global perspective, so we basically just asked him one day."

Torstein, you and Cern know each other for a long time, how come that you joined him only recently? Why so late? Was your Death Metal band, CHTON, much more important? I assume that live activity is most important to you when it is about CHTON… But still I found strange for an IMMOLATION fan to perform else. Death Metal discharges energy, aggressiveness but nothing more. Where am I mistaken?

Torstein: "MANES wasn't looking for any new members before I joined, so that's the reason for that. Doing gigs is a driving factor with CHTON, yes, and like you said; it's like a fix of energy and raw aggression for us, and hopefully for the crowd. If you find it strange that I can manage to be **both** a 'fan' of Immolation **and** play bass in MANES, that's a shame – I do, and it's no problem at all. I listen to lots of Death, Thrash, Black, Doom etc., but also stuff that has nothing to do with Metal at all. CHTON and MANES have two different agendas when it comes to music. Where the goal for CHTON is stage and studio, MANES has the path as a goal in itself with the creative process – which is also the main reason for me to be equally active in both bands… If anyone wants more info on CHTON, check out www.CHTON.com."

Now, since we reviewed the entire line up, I am still obsessed by one question: is MANES a band or solely a project? All members are involved in other more or less famous bands as well, but definitely pretty much more "active" and with a larger discography than MANES'… Or perhaps the experimental dimension (the OTHER side!) of each of you has just found a correspondence and its place in MANES?

"MANES is probably somewhere in the middle between a band and a project. Since all members have other projects, there is no pressure, no steam not getting out of anyone. We can take our time, and do things in our own tempo. Also, as you have mentioned, you can think of MANES as cooperation between various people, to get their alternative ideas out... Not a hybrid, but a bastard, a mutant..."

I know you performed live one single time with RED HARVEST. There is the intention of experiencing this again, but still no certainty. How would MANES look like in a live performance? I assume it is not the case of spooky pyrotechnical effects or other dragons, mascots…yet something exquisite…Well what it would be that special? As for the instruments…I suppose Cern would need to carry his laptop everywhere… Your music is still based on an electronic backbone…some would name it synthetic…, tell me, do you think that classical means are "dead and buried"? Is it over the era of classical instruments while computer becomes the master?

"We have some grandiose plans, but..."

Torstein: "Yeah, we have some grandiose plans for live shows – well, maybe not truly grandiose, but we don't want it to be a typical rock-gig with all that comes with that term. We want it to be more suitable for the music we play… What that'll look like, time will tell, but we certainly hope it'll be cool enough… As for computer becoming master etc. – that's all a little 50ies-Flash Gordon-view of The Future, I feel. I think there is room for both the banjo and the sequencer for many years to come…"

Cern, I remember, once upon a time…, you used to coordinate a fanzine, Stigma Diabolicum. What happened? I guess in 1995 you were just about to release #3 and afterwards……it all was silent. What was the motivation you had when you firstly decided to print a fanzine? Perhaps solely the desire of being deeply involved in metal scene, he, he? Today there are many more labels and magazines than fans…!

"Same as with BM, I lost interest in the whole scene stuff... It became something different from what I was interested in. So, instead of doing like the rest (adapting, conforming), I just jumped off the train..."

Torstein: "I think issue 3 was released, but I'm not sure… Anyway; it was a damn shame that Stigma Diabolicum #4 never was released at least. I've read the interviews that was supposed to be in there, and some of them are truly entertaining, with bands like Mayhem, Sodom, Darkthrone, Tormentor, Samael, Merciless, Sepultura, Asphyx, Entombed, Embryonic (pre-Emperor), Beherit, Immolation (!), Amputation (pre-Immortal) etc etc…. Bloody Hell! "

Here I come again at your tracks. They are extremely complex, knotty, rich in "texture" but absolutely charming. What can you tell me about role of both lyrics and music? Where do they complete each other and where do they substitute? I assume there are themes like despair, lack of hope and other special mental moods are sufficiently developed here, right?

"Yes, you're right about the themes..."

Torstein: "The music and lyrics try to complete each other, like you say, but there is no grand plan behind the completion/substitution there. Asgeir is the main man when it comes to vocal-lines, and has 'given' more importance to some phrases and lyrical tid-bits than others with his emphasis etc. You're also spot-on concerning lyrical themes. Buckets filled to the rim of good old'fashioned misery were poured onto the music… BTW: The music being charming isn't really a good thing, is it?"

Once I listened to the album for more than 10 times, I can say that Vilosophe is guided by one single rule: there are no limits! On the other hand, perhaps I might be a little out of line if saying that this album is a mental one, practically addressed to a different category and plastically saying, especially to intellectuals? You listen to music, read the lyrics but in the essence you need to read between lines and you need to open yourself to the creative impulse, which is in here and to its inspiration but solely in a Dark manner. A friend of mine said that this kind of music is perfectly accompanied by a drug…

"It's not really meant for intellectuals or anything… It just became what it is... You're right in that you have to put something of yourself into it, to get a whole picture. We left some holes in there that you need to fill in yourself... Nothing is served on a silver plate..."

Torstein: "MANES is the perfect score for an early morning overdose."

If artistically speaking there are no limits what about the social life, religious or political ones? How do you stand? Which are your guiding lines?

"My main driving force is the opposite of the normal, traditional, expected…"

Torstein: "Are you asking about our political and religious stance? That is, of course, completely individual within the band, but personally I'm not dumb enough to be sure of anything…"

How do you earn your existence? Who are you when music is out of the question? Is music an escape from the unfortunate routine where each of us is selling his body in order to earn money? Do you have big families, responsibilities?

"Eivind is working, Asgeir is doing some stock market stuff, he, he, Rune and Torstein are studying (both of them film and media I think), and I'm not doing anything. I think that creativity and artistry is more a driving force than escapism, I think, I think. Money is not generally a big issue here in Norway. Everybody gets enough money to have a place to live and food to eat."

Up to the way you perform music I wouldn't be surprised of your tastes in listening to music. Yet, can you help me, telling me what your musical choices are? Other hobbies: movies, books?

"My tastes are quite varied, but generally I'm into 3D stuff: Dark, Depressive, and different stuff. He, he. (alphabetically): a perfect circle, amon tubin, anathema, autecre, aphex twin, beyond dawn, biosphere, black heart procession, björk, brothomstates, chi-a.d., cure, delusion, depeche mode, devil doll, dødheimsgard, eat static, fantomas, g.g.f.h., godspeed you black emperors, hawkwind, katatonia, krøyt, massive attack, mogwai, monumentum, morphine, morte macabre, nodens ictus, nurse with wound, orbital, ozric tentacles, peeping tom, pink floyd, pj harvey, portishead, primal scream, prodigy, raison d'être, red harvest, sadness, samael, scanner, scorn, seigmen, ship of fools, shpongle, sigur ros, st. germaine, subgud, swans, tangerine dream, third and the mortal, thorns, tiamat, tool, tricky, ulver, voivod, windham hell, xploding plastix... That's what I feel I like today. Tomorrow I will probably come out with a completely different list... I think..."

Torstein: "Ok, I can pull a few movie favorites then: The Godfather I+II & Apocalypse Now (Coppola), The Kingdom + some other stuff (Von Trier), Fight Club & Se7en (Fincher), Ereaserhead, Blue Velvet & Mulholland Drive + + (Lynch), Pi & Req. for a dream (Aronofsky), Nekromantic & Der Todesking (Buttgereit) etc etc. And we mustn't forget stuff like Spinal Tap, Alien, Monty Python stuff, almost all the Kubrick's films, some Fulci films and some of the Tarantiono's films and some Tarkovski etc. etc."

The last track of the album is a recited one, in German, like featuring a passage of a soundtrack, probably 'The death King'. To be frank, I understood nothing. Can you help me here as well? What is its purpose? It looks like it wouldn't have any connection with the rest of the album…

"Its main purpose, in my opinion, is to disturb you, awaken you, a contrast. It has some connection with the album as a whole, especially the lyrics (both used and unused) and samples have a concrete connection.."

Torstein: "If you don't understand a word of German, like me, it's more like an ambient track. If you understand German you would hear a man telling about his troubles with his wife, and his way out of the troubles. The essence of this passage can be traced to both some of the lyrics and to the cover-artwork/concept…"

I noticed that your photos are rather odd. You do have weird ammunition: bikes, weapons with thorns, sun glasses… What is it that you want to express with this image of yours? Is it perhaps an act of visual art and no thing else?

"Again, it's a revolt against the common sense, rules, laws, dogmas, expectations, hopes... or whatever."

There was initially a discussion about your own web site, but things seem to move slowly. Don't you think that a web site would be of a great help and comfort both for you and your fans? Internet is not a fashion anymore, but a bare necessity!!!

"Ehhh, I haven't had internet access in many years! It doesn't really bother me that much, as I don't care too much about what other people are doing or reacting... email would simplify things a lot, though."

Torstein: "We have a man of some sort working on a website, but I don't know when it'll be ready… Maybe some time in 2004? Our first idea for a website was to create a site for massive interaction and possibilities, but when we found out we didn't have the finances to do something like that we just went for a cheap dude who will make a standard promosite with some pictures and blah blah blah… That's ok."

The name of the album has a strange connection (at least resonant) with philosophy. Where from this wordsgame? What is the significance of this title? In other words…I need help again in reading between lines.

"A) vile (adj. 1. shameful and disgusting, 2. bad). B) philosophy (1.the search for knowledge, esp. concerning nature and the meaning of existence, 2. system of thought resulting from such a search, 3. calm acceptance of events; self control in the face of suffering or danger)."

Tell me about life in Trondheim, how is it like to live there? What could I visit there? What could I visit in Norway? You don't seem too keen to get into UE… So there must be some interesting things about your country…

"I think Trondheim is a pretty boring place to be, but I would probably think so in any other town too... I'm not that social, so I don't care that much about what's outside the door..."

Torstein: "Norway has a priest for prime minister… That's fucked. Other than that Norway is ok: cold like hell in winter, but nice to look at from inside."

ATROX and MANES are now under the same label and both have released albums in the same year. Could it be just a simple coincidence or maybe one helped the other…and both got lucky… Most certainly it seems like ATROX had the role of catalyzing the process. Am I wrong? It is only left to hear tomorrow that CHTON signs with code666.

"You are right in that. ATROX was first in contact with Code666... CHTON has signed with another label."

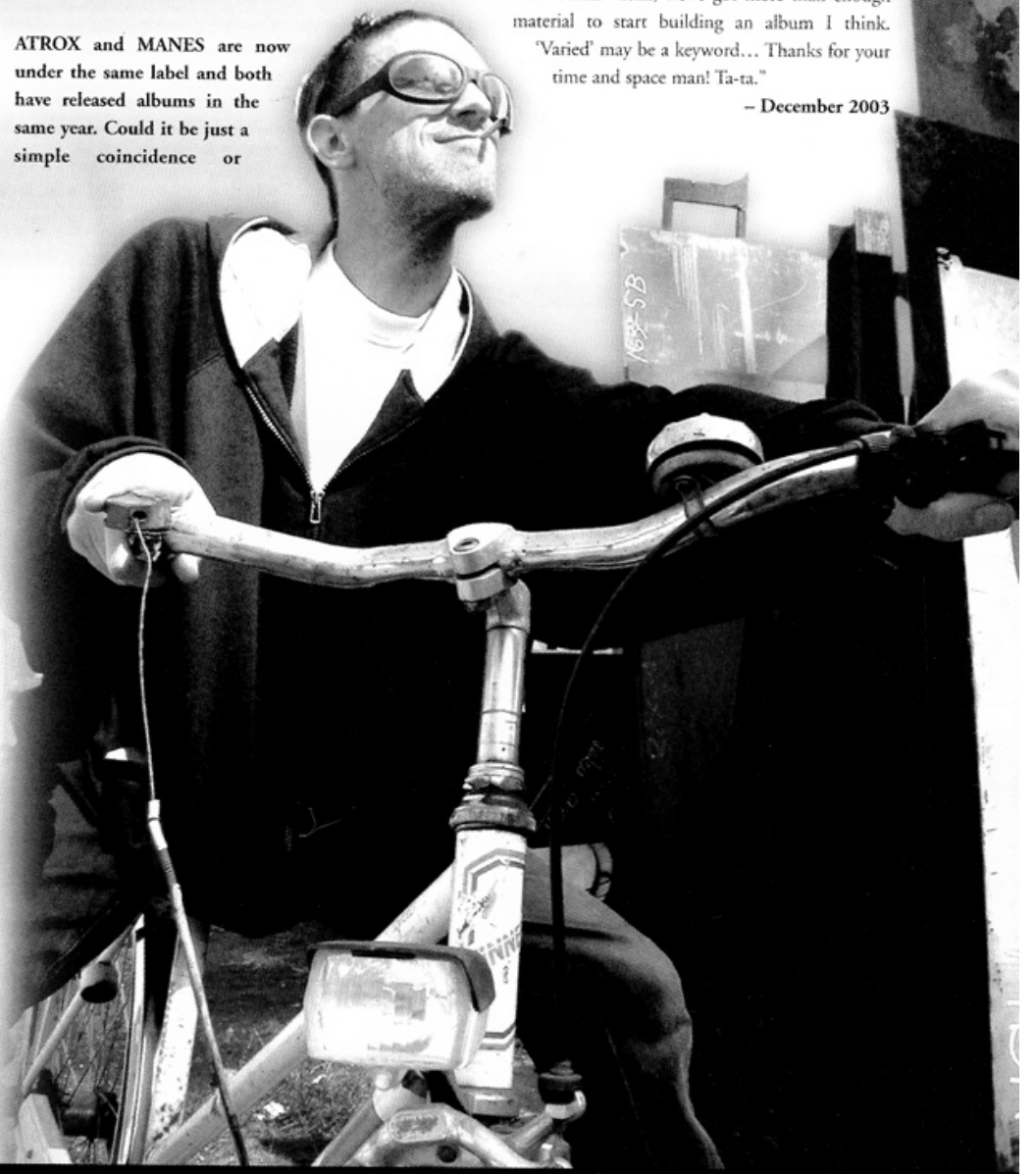
Torstein: "Eivind told Emi of Code666, after signing there with ATROX, that he also played in MANES, and that MANES was without a deal… Emi offered us an OK deal, and now we're on Code666 with MANES. Code666 would never be the perfect home for CHTON with their 'alternative' profile. CHTON has signed with Retribute Records from the UK."

Gentlemen, I do thank you and I do appreciate your patience and support and, of course I wish you well and best luck in the world. Torstein, you were telling me it wasn't that sure whether you might record an album or an EP including some old tracks remixed. Should we expect a new album for year 2004? How it is supposed to sound? Any special guests? And since I have not the lyrics of your latest album, I would like to end this discussion with the significance of this: I was never free I was chosen…would you explain a little? This said, so long!

"BTW: Cern TH Skei answered most of the questions - where not indicated... We have started to think about some new stuff, nothing more specific. Probably some live shows. The new stuff is more varied, I think, a bit different, but some similarities. No, I won't explain it, this is one of those things you need to read between lines, and come up with an answer that fits you; you and only you...

Torstein: "Yeah, we've got more than enough material to start building an album I think. 'Varied' may be a keyword… Thanks for your time and space man! Ta-ta."

– December 2003





This very interview was performed and included here because there were many « demands » coming from you, my readers; therefore, here it is a material with legendary Sam Rosenthal. From various reasons I decided the first part of the interview to be made by an acquaintance of mine, Matei Alexandru Mocanu, while the second one was conducted by me.

Black Tape For A Blue Girl

PART I

The 2002 'Scavenger Bride' is Black Tape for a Blue Girl's most recent attempt at concept albums. It is a multicultural sound experience, mixing trance-like Middle Eastern sound textures, dark, twisted and scorching synths, neoclassical influences and last, but not least, the fading influences of Brian Eno. Given 'The Scavenger Bride' is my favorite Black Tape for a Blue Girl album; I just tried to unveil this diaphanous bride and reveal its secrets to the fans. Without being sacrilegious, my deed aims to break down the multi-layered wall of mysteries surrounding the fleeting creature. Once my interview would have brought down the bride from its ivory tower, all the fans could admire it in its entire naked splendor.

More conceptual and less ambient. This is the first impression I had after listening to your album. Is Black Tape… going to take on this path on its future albums?

"I do think that the next CD will be less ambient then CDs in the past, though I can't say that it will be more conceptual. I think that the scavenger bride is about as far as one can go, with a concept album. I have only now begun work on the next CD, and I feel - though of course I never know for sure what will happen - that it will be less conceptual and more song-oriented. This said, I have been working on a new novel. It's about 70 pages long, so far. In there is where a concept will be completely weaved. Some of the lyrics for the album might take themes and short passages from the book, to be revealed in musical form."

Why concept albums? Does a story complement the music better than would have done it random songs by themselves? Does music need a leading narrative thread to get it out of a labyrinth-like creative universe? How would you compare your album with other concept albums like, say, Pink Floyd's, Chaostar's and Elend's?

"I think that a concept album is a nice way to tell a long story in musical form. I only know Pink Floyd's concept albums, so I cannot really give many good thoughts on the question. I wanted each song to be viable on its own, and not just part of the whole, so people could enjoy them with or without the interconnecting story."

The Scavenger Bride also had a number of guests musicians including Bret Helm of Audra and Athan Maroulis of Spahn Ranch on vocals, and Michael Laird of Unto Ashes on dulcimer, mandolin & percussion. Are you going to bring an increasing number of guest artists on your future projects? Does this help your music gain in diversity?

"I don't foresee an increasing amount of guests. I like having a band with a set group of people who create the sound, so there is coherence for the listener. The musicians on the next album will be Vicki, Lisa, Elysabeth, Michael, Athan and myself... but there will probably be a guest on a song here or there.... I do think that each musician brings diversity to the band, which is why I would never want to be a solo project. They all bring their specialty to the sound, which makes it a lot more interesting for me as the creator."

At times, your ethereal music seems closer to the music score area than the gloomy fields of Darkwave. Do you find this statement true? What do you think of music score composer Philip Glass?

"I think Glass has created some amazing albums, but also many that fall flat because they are too similar to others he has written. Some of my favorites are Koyannisqatsi, Glass Works and The Photographer, all of which are from the late 70s. So I think that maybe when he did less work, he put more energy into each one and they were better. I think that my music lands somewhere between Glass and Darkwave, don't you?"

Ever listened to peer-band – in my opinion, that is – Amber Asylum? What do you think of "Songs of sex and death"? Do you consider sex and death to be paramount issues in every artist's life?

"I have never actually listened to Amber Asylum's album... But yes, I think that a lot of artistic creation deals with sex and death. For me, I also deal a great deal with honesty, purity, and commitment.... But those are still somewhere in there."

I saw a change for the better in the fact you started using mainly natural instruments on your tracks: violins, cellos and flutes. Thus, your search for natural sounds could make one compare you with Dead Can Dance sound archaeologists. Does this flatter you? Does this upset you?

"Well, first I would disagree since my first album in 1986 included cello, and I have always had a lot of natural instruments in my sound. While I love many of Dead Can Dance's albums, I don't really feel my work is like what they create, because I see a lot of cultural plundering (you say 'sound archaeologists') in what they do. They pick up a new culture, and their music goes in that direction... I feel that my work comes much more from the heart. Maybe it has a taste of a culture, but it doesn't get overwhelmed in it, to lose site of what is BLACK TAPE."



How are things going with your work on a Dead Can Dance 'Fortune presents gifts not according to the book' cover?

"The song is all recorded, and I have only to mix it. It is going to be out in the spring, on a Greek label www.black-lotus-recs.com which is releasing a compilation of Dead Can Dance covers.... The song sounds very nice, I had Athan singing harmonies. I had Lisa playing the intro part - that was on the dulcimer, on the original - on the flute. You will like it."

What do you know about Swedish label Cold Meat Industry? What about the bands under it? Do you like Arcana?

"I know a lot about CMI, since I have been in touch with Roger for over a decade. I like the more ethereal / textural releases (Morthond, Arcanta, Raison D) but not the Death Metal / spooky stuff. I think Arcana are amazing. I saw them live at the WGT this year. The show was stunning, very spiritual."

Raison D'Etre have released a new album right now? What do you think of it and his music? Do you find it too politically-oriented? Why hasn't Black... take on this more social-oriented approach?

"I actually haven't listened to Raison D in many... many years, so I don't know anything about the political content of their new music. I take a political stance in the email lists I send out from Projekt, but I don't really deal with that in my art because I'm more about love than social conditions. I leave that to others..."

If you were to preach to a group of teenagers new comers to the area of 'unholy un-pop' (a bad pun for 'Goth') what would you direct them towards? Marylin Manson or Black Tape for a Blue Girl?

"Well, they already know Marilyn Manson, so why don't they give Black Tape a listen?"

Even if I know you like to leave open the question as to what the band's name stands for, I think I know the correct answer: Dark music for a sad girl. When you came up with the name, back in the '80's, were you thinking that, someday, one band would come up with a name like My Dying Bride?

"I don't agree or disagree with your interpretation. I never really thought about other bands with similar names."

'The Matrix' or 'The Lord of the Rings'?

"Not The lord of the rings!! However, the first Matrix was the best!"

PART II

You started Projekt label almost 20 years ago.... What is the secret that you keep it still alive ?

"Secret? Being nimble, I guess. You need to always be ready to make changes and stop doing things you thought were right... Otherwise you get trapped because you are still doing old concepts that no longer work.... Survival is really all about money, unfortunately. I hate having to be a capitalist."

Could you be so kind to offer me some opinions regarding Projekt' bands: Voltaire, Mira, Audra, Soul Whirling Somewhere, Chandeen, Steve Roach...

"Chandeen aren't on Projekt. The rest are excellent musicians creating amazing sounds..."

What albums are best-sellers from the whole Projekt history?

"Compilations have always been the best sellers. Recently, The New Face of Goth and Projekt: Gothic have



done quite well! For non-comps, Blacktape: Remnants of a Deeper Purity, Steve Roach: Midnight Moon, Voltaire: The Devil's Bris."

What is the main goal with Projekt? Could we discuss about profit, money? You released lots of compilations CD in the last period… What does marketing represent for you? Could I say: Ok, till there is the art, the rest is business… What are the borders?

"I think that in the beginning, any label thinks about it purely as art, and naively says 'I don't need to think about business or profit.' Little labels think that if they release a quality artist, the listeners will be smart enough to seek it out and buy enough records to make it a success. Sadly, that is not the case at all. It takes a lot of business work to make a band successful. And if you look at what *is* successful, most of it is crap — so it disproves the theory that quality will succeed. Or that people are searching for good artistic music. So after doing this for 20 years, I have to keep in mind that I have a family who like to eat dinner, and like to have a roof over their heads (and in Sasha's case, Puppet shows to attend). So of course decisions need to be made that involve NOT LOOSING MONEY!"

You also released the double CD of Black tape, "With a Milion tear-stained memoirs" this year. Why?

"Alex at Trisol wanted to put out a best of, and it was a good way to get out of my contract with him as he was not any good to work with. I decided to release it on Projekt in America, because the fans over here deserve to be able to get a hold of it... We're nearly sold out on the U.S. Edition. It was a limited edition."

Do you have any idea how many copies of Black tape albums you sold in total till now?

"Yes, I know down to the unit, actually. Aside from Steve Roach, who has many… many more albums released, Black Tape is the best selling artist on Projekt."

I saw you preferred to keep contact by Internet. Do you still have nostalgia for the letters' smell, maybe? The postman who came day by day with the press, envelopes….

"No, not really. Because these days, if I have to write half a page by hand, I get cramps in my fingers... I am so used to typing. The mail created a lot of stuff that we had to store somewhere, or feel guilty about throwing it away. The internet is a lot easier, because you don't feel bad hitting the delete button. That wasn't a very romantic answer, was it? (Laughs)" **(I'm afraid no-ed)**

Who is Sam Rosenthal in the private life?

"Somebody quiet and private."

It seems Sasha started the work on the laptop on a fragile age, he, he…

"Sasha is a he. And like all 18 month old boys, he plays with trucks too. But he always wants to do whatever it is that mama and papa are doing, and he sees us at the computer a lot... So he wants to type too. There are five computer keyboards in our house, so he always wants to tap at one. This morning, he sort of said the words 'otter' and 'duck' and imitated me putting lip balm on... He's a great kid!"

You were very excited for your European concert you did in Germany… Some impressions now? The public is the same as the American one? What about Projekt fest?

"There are so many more supporters in Europe for this kind of music. America is our home base, but the European audience has so much more potential. There's so much more chance to reach a wider audience, which is the point of making art: to have people discover and enjoy it."

Bush, war, attacks of terrorists, America, Iraq, Israel, Kashmir, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan… this is a bloody world.

"I think Bush is an idiot, who used 9-11 to forward his conservative agenda. His fascist desire to over-throw governments and create a new sense of colonialism... He's obviously failing miserably. Everyone hates America now, because of this idiot who used the Supreme Court to get into office. I'm a supporter of the democrat, Howard Dean: www.deanforamerica.com".

Are you interested in religion?

"I think I missed out by not having a proper Jewish upbringing..."

What is your opinion regarding Darkwave scene? Is there a big difference between Europe and America?

"Yes. The European scene seems much stronger to me. In America, a 'big' multi-day Goth fest gets perhaps 600 attendees. It's pretty sad. But the country is a lot bigger than Germany or such, so it's harder to get around."

I noticed you distributed lots of old albums, not only the newest ones and the prices are very attractive. How is possible?

"Because I care!"

OK, Sam. Thanks for the interview. I found out a new album would be released in 2004.

"I just started to work on it, now. I plan to have a maxi-CD out in February of some of the recent songs I am creating, even though they may / may not be on the full-length later in the year... Check the website in a few months for info: http://www.projekt.com. Thanks for the interview...."

December 2003



Misanthrope

It is band with a great tradition; perhaps even the most famous on the French Metal scene, which, during all its 14 years of activity, had released many interesting albums, performed many gigs and featured many changes in the line up as well. Nevertheless, we can say that the core of this band remained compact, meaning Jean Jaques Moreac and Philippe Curtois. Let's find out something about MISANTHROPE over a nice conversation with them!

Bonjour Philippe… S.A.S. de lÁrgiliere', Ayveric, AS.A.S or even more recent His Most Serene Highness de L'Árgiliere! How many personalities are interconnecting here inside these scenic names? Which would be their significances? I believe they all start from Moliere… but here from… where do they lead?

"Hello, here is Philippe Courtois, vocalist and lyricist Of MISANTHROPE-Argile since 1989. There is me the poor human been and S.A.S de l'Argilière a super Human full of esoteric and immortal powers... All those are the same declination of Molière's Hero, Alceste, created in 1666. All is one and one is the vision of me as a multi fantastic visionnary dreamer. I always wanted to separete me from who I'm on a record or on a stage. There is the musician and me, we are two separate people without any schizophrenic feelings. S.A.S de l'Argilière is the voice of what Philippe cannot say."

If we travel back in time, we discover that, back in 1989, you and two friends of yours had decided to found this very band. During almost two years you released 2 demos and one year later you released your first split CD with a South American band, TORTURER. What can you tell me about those times? How was Philippe, 14 years ago? Thinner? Had he long hair? I remember you used to play guitar by that time...while now it is only about vocals…

"I do not say big things about the beginning, we where 3 friends, fans of extreme Metal; in '87-'88 we had to buy instruments and so we were choosing, ok you will be the bassist, you the drummer etc... I found the name during my French study class. It was fine to have a strong concept band when you read Molière and King Diamond and Kreator were huge influences for me... so it was. Well, 14 years ago I was a solid kid, fan of Metal and really believing that it was better to live in San Francisco bay area than Livry Gargan at 13 km East from Paris. Beside this we had no idea of what music was and how to record a song in studio. We had that innocence; I love innocence and its



stupidities. Yes I was really thinner, I gained 30 kg from 1992-1996, you know the usual stress of a business man eh eh eh. Of course my hair was long… the last time I cut my hair was in '88 for my school exams. Then and until then I never came back to this shitty place eh eh eh. I started guitar in 1985 when my big brother borrowed me its copy Strato caster guitar jumping on my bed listening debut CD of Running Wild, Metallica, Kreator, ADX and Helloween. This stuff has always been massive in my heart... I still listen to those bands every month."

Your first CD, "Variation of Inductive Theories", was an album which enjoyed a great unexpected success. Do you think that an explanation might be the fact that by that time bands like SEPTIC FLESH were really on the trend and thus the fans' attention was pretty much focused on Atmospheric Metal sonorities? How do you see your debut now, after so many years?

"Yep, 'Variation On Inductive Theories' was released in April 1993 and reached a little more than 5000 copies, it costed less than 2000 euros at that time. It was pretty enjoying. The music of that album was rich and Avantgarde. Septic Flesh 'Mystic places of dawn' came out one year after MISANTHROPE's 'Variation On Inductive Theories', I think Holy brought out killer innovative band in those years from 1992 to 1995. It was until 1997 the golden years of the label. Everything was selling really well. The label and its band roosters were on the wave. Yes, we have been part of Atmo post Doom and pre Gothic Death Metal scene, at the Avantgarde as usual with a real underground way of creating songs, concept and spirit. I love 'Variation On Inductive Theories' there are many things inside… spiritually and musically. Of course, the production is 10 years old but it rules... I like it…but like a first successful debut, all the rest was mistaken or incomplete work."

One year later you released a new CD, "Miracle: Totem Taboo". What was the impact of this material? Which new elements have you brought on the musical scene of those days? I know that the line up remained unchanged since the previous material, a fact that got altered afterwards…

"1994 'Totem Taboo' was an experience, its 4 songs unfinished from 1992 with an enormous sound, 1 remix from 'Variation On Inductive Theories' sessions and 30 minutes of new stuff. This 1994 recording was our most original and Avantgarde material ever, there is everything inside, I'm really proud of it nowadays. Yes, it was with the same line up of 'Variation On Inductive Theories' so… things came out fast and tight in studio... It was almost a studio band at that time; we never played those tracks on stage eh eh eh. Improvisation, emotions, atmosphere and avant-gardism... all that I was worshipping at that time. It was Pure Metal Art, creation with no commercial thoughts at all, pure artistic freedom."

"1666… Theatre Bizarre" was the third opus and, to be sincere, this one really struck me! With a more simplified formula, meaning you, J.J. and Alexander Iskandar (keyboards), you've actually put up for a genuine sensation. Up to me, this was the Dark-est album of yours. I know that on this material, the other ELEND member, Renaud Tschirner, got involved himself as well. Where from such association? Was it just because both bands "belonged" to Holy Records?

"For many people '1666... Theatre Bizarre' & 'Visionnaire' are MISANTHROPE top knock. '1666... Theatre Bizarre' was a compromise between the avantgardist feeling and real song with structure made to be hit and played live. It was planned to be our final and last album. So we put everything in, all the remaining ideas, from blast beat songs to ballad and pure atmospheric keyboards Sympho metal. Yes it's great... and the vocals are absolutely mourning crying and emotional like hell. I love it. The formula was simpler and also Charles & Olivier left the band 4 month before entering the studio; with Jean-Jacques we had real belief in our work to release it almost alone, both of us with some help of friends and technicians. It's not the darkest; it's the most genuine in musical creativity. 'Sadistic Sex Daemon' is the darkest CD along with 'Visionnaire' to my point of view. Renaud came up to sing le roman noir in a German version. Elend where preparing the very famous "Les Ténèbres du dehors" in the same studio just after us. So it was very easy to ask Renaud to come along, they were composing next door. I was doing taxi for them from their house to the studio. this helped a lot...

Do you believe it I stayed hours alone in my car with Elend's female vocalist, Eve Gabriel Siskind, singing together depressive French pop... almost a dream, but the main thing is that we were and still are real close friends since almost 10 years now."

Right after this album, you brought Jean Baptiste Boitel in the line up, musician who would become actually a great part of the holy trinity-MISANTHROPE. How did he convince you? Did he benefit of a serious background, which couldn't be ignored or what?

"Jean-Baptiste was at school with Jean-Jacques, he was following the band since 2 years, coming at the rehearsal and gigs. He was the one since a long time already. Jean-Jacques told me it would be him. And since then he is with us behind the stage because last year he asked us to stop playing guitar on stage, he wanted to be behind the stage, master of MISANTHROPE stage live sound... as well as studio keyboards and synth. As he is our brother we respect his decision and the new formula is even better."

"Visionnaire" is released in 1997 and I must say that the Swedish label exercised a great influence over you. Moreover, there are pretty noticeable some Nordic melodious Death Metal shades, not to mention the cooperation with two IN FLAMES members… Tell me… was it an album with a good reception?

"'Visionnaire' is a must for many people because that's the first time MISANTHROPE appeared as an international production with a producer. We were sleeping at Jesper's apartment and Anders friend was Fredman's assistant. 'Visionnaire' was his first album as assistant... now Anders owns a part of this studio and more... It's incredible. 'Visionnaire' includes the song 'Batisseur de cathedrales', which is our ultimate song. So it's a very important one, we also had a strong international success with that one."

On April 1999, it came the time for "Libertine Humiliations" album. Right by that time you also performed your first serious gig, besides SEPTIC FLESH and NATRON. Tell us some of the memories remained from that time. Where they good, pleasant or not?

"'Libertine Humiliations' is the explosion of the band in France and the concretization of our band outside France. This tour with friends of Septic Flesh was excellent, we made very nice performance. It was our real first tour with over 10 gigs in the raw only in France. We became top French band of the year 1999 and 2000. When I see that, with the eyes of the kid of the suburb of Paris, I think it was an impossible challenge. But the problem is that now we can only come down ah ah ah. It's better to keep the artistic feeling."

There are not many bands who can actually release a triple CD including some of the most important moments of their history. Well, you did that. Has this release reached its purpose? There were solely 1793 samples of it; can you land us more details?

"For the ten years of the band in May 1999 we released a 3CD box with a 112 pages booklet with all unreleased audio material + live bootleg. It's sold out of course it was limited at 1793 copies in the memory of the year of the death by guillotine of Marie Antoinette queen of the French during the French revolution. So, expect a new box in May 2004 for our 15 years!"

Immortal Misanthrope must be a new chapter in the band's history, especially since you had as drum player an excellent and indeed talented musician, Alex Phelipet. The mixture of Classic Heavy Death Metal with Symphonic Orchestral meant an authentic shock for the French scene, but not only. I actually must admit, it was a damned well conceived and executed album, am I wrong?

"Yes 'Immortal Misanthrope' is our top seller so far. It closed the trilogy of Fredman studio along 'Visionnaire' & 'Libertine Humiliations'. It's a killer album; it was released in a French version, European version, Russian version, Brazilian version and of course Japanese. With such amount of money, we built up 'Le manoir des deportes', our own studio, where we recorded Argile and our latest 'Sadistic Sex Daemon' album. Jean-Baptiste did a lot for this album; it's his testament in the band. One thing: Alexis did not record the drums on that album, that's all I have to tell about him. 'Immortal Misanthrope' made a super carrier, I love this album and it was really hard to do 'Sadistic Sex Daemon' after such a good CD. But we did it."

Your latest accomplishment has meant plenty changes as well: in line up, studio for recordings and also in style. But let us take it step by step: the same trio plus a new drummer (Gael Feret) and a new guitar player (Anthony Scemana). Where did you find these musicians? The guitar player really knows what he is doing while the drummer actually kills…

"2002 is the big change in our history; we changed completely the line-up, changing drummer and guitarist. Jean-Jacques took the composition more personally, we had a real problem to start the album 'Sadistic Sex Daemon', big tension came out. We had together, me and Jean-Jacques, to rebuild everything conceptually and spiritually... too many people were around the band and put bullshit everywhere. So we said goodbye to all those who disturbed the good following of the band. It took almost 3 years to achieve one of our best work 'Sadistic Sex Daemon'. Gael Feret came in the band for the 'Immortal Misanthrope' tour in 2001; he is a brilliant musician, the drummer of MISANTHROPE. Dirk from Scarve told me to contact him. He was the man! Anthony Scemama is our amazing new guitarist; he is the brother of Olivia, the female bassist of No Return & Garwall who is a student of Jean-Jacques. It all came very easily. We are now, since very early 2002, a team of great musicians and friends, it is lovely."

No one expects you to replace Sweden with Finland or –to be more précised- to give up Fredman (not since you experienced a real trilogy together) in favor of Anssi Kippo (CHILDREN OF BODOM, TO DIE FOR, SINERGY). I assume it was a pretty strange experience to record music in a place (50 km or less far from Russia) where the temperature used to reach -30 C degrees. What was the reason for your choice? I mean, why did you choose for Astia studio in particular? It is, I guess…, the third studio you entered so far. Which were the major differences that determined you to choose for it? Malicious voices say you actually spent 5-6 times less in studio this time, in comparison with earlier recordings. It happens that I know this studio was a recommendation from YEARNING…

"Actually I love Fredman and respect him for all the trust we had together. But it seems it was impossible to continue after our Swedish trilogy. Anssi Kippo is the one and the sound is the best so far, so, no regret... just more experience and an achievement of intense studio work. Yearning boys made me in touch with Anssi, I checked how easy is to

work with him. I listened to Synergy & Children of Bodom and died in from such quality. Jean- Jacques produces the band, we record it ourselves, Anssi is the mixing guy. Fredman is the bigger studio, Anssi is the hardest worker and our first 3 studio-albums were just a joke in front of Scandinavian studios. Malicious voices say always bullshit, we stayed 20 days in Fredman recording and mix included for 'Libertine Humiliations' & 'Immortal Misanthrope'. For 'Sadistic Sex Daemon' we stayed from August to December almost daily in our studio and 6 days only for the mix."

Before you reached Finland, with the album, J.J Moreac has mastered the artistic production and all technical details (guitars, bass, French lyrics) assisted by Jean-Baptiste Boitel as sound engineer. Solely the drums and the English lyrics were mixed in Finland. Why so? I find it at least curious…

"Not all the music has been mixed in Astia studio. Drums and English vocals have been recorded in an other studio, not our own studio 'Le manoir des déportées' and not Astia but a huge Parisian studio called recorder. That's all."

Well, I must confess, this new album made a great impression on me! I can't say exactly if good or bad, but there is obvious you had changed the direction. What happened to Jean Jaques ? What exactly impressed him that much so that he came out with such music? A kind of Heavy Metal in a glorious shape yet pretty extreme as well… There are some Power/Progressive touches also. I believe it is the most explosive and prevailing album so far…and it is characterized by both violence and rapidity, caused by the guitars' riffs, absolutely charming…

"Thanks for your words. Jean-Jacques wanted an album more straight and Dark with killer technical riffing, from Heavy to Black Death and Avantgarde with Power. We recorded 15 songs, 10 are on this CD. Yes, you are right your description is fine. I trust Jean-Jacques and his work, it's perfect. I also just did my lyrics on 'Sadistic Sex Daemon' because I was just back from Argile promotion and I was musically empty. Anyway lyrics are a must even in MISANTHROPE history."

Lyrics must be, as always, your mission. Tell me, is Moliere playing the same important role inside your obsessions? And then… the same erotic themes, of occultism and poems… Am I wrong if I say this album carries out a message rather francophone than overall European? Perhaps even an elitist message?

"My lyrics are me. I'm French and try to show the world what is cultural in the past France. The one I dream of."

As far as the vocals are regarded…, damn, your voice's inflexions are simply amazing! Either Black or Death…or even Heavy Metal…, have you decided not to follow any rule?

"Like King Diamond, but in my own world I do what I want and have no limits. I'll even try to have more clean and singed vocals as well in the future."

There is a beautiful gesture I noticed. For each CD, the buyer receives as bonus another one, containing 30 minutes of unpublished music and a video support, of 20 minutes, taken during the recording sessions. Well, I assume it was about a substantial budget since you afforded such free gift… How did you come to such idea?

"No, it's not for each CD, it's for the one who gets the French limited edition Double CD digipack strictly limited to 3000 copies. Now with mp3 downloading we have to give really more to the guy who puts 20 euros in our CD in shop. We do that just to keep at least the same amount of CDs sold as 'Immortal Misanthrope' and not to regress as the whole fuckin' CD market over here. I loved the idea to give more than the album, it's cool and it was fun to video anyway... with 450 euros you can make easily a good video of your making of… due that I have a numeric video camera. Thanks Holy to let us doing this on this support."

Well, the photos printed on the booklet of the CD simply seem so awkward… and inappropriate! Please, do not get me wrong, but the dark side of the album has not even the slightest connection with the band's members' big smiles (I find them pretty incongruous and in best case funny). I have the impression that both music and lyrics of this album are much too serious so that these photos would fit… Am I wrong?

"Well it's your point of view; we can make evil music and be nice people. I always smile with a sadistic face on every CD. It's always the same story. We like to have fun because life is so shitty; we make everything turning out its way and give ridiculousness to this world empty of feeling. We are like that dark in Music, Fun in life. Maybe our music and lyrics are an exorcism that permits us to leave on this earth. I saw Marduk boys in Hotel playing with bananas on the top of their head, check DVD of Dimmu Borgir or Cradle of Filth... I even saw things that I cannot tell. MISANTHROPE is extremely serious with everything, but it's the French class, if we meet one day, a thing that I hope I will offer a good night of drinks and laughing. This is the way we are living... My life is smooth and hot, it is dandy and libertine. I can cry and laugh I have no connection at all with our Art."

There are quite some gigs that you performed lately…and some continue to pop up. Tell me about MISANTHROPE on the stage…Can you relate some memories next to the gigs you had with bands like DIMMU BORGIR, CRADLE OF FILTH, GLOOMY GRIM or YEARNING ?

"We just finish a Belgium & France 14 gigs tour for the 'Sadistic Daemon' tour 2003. So, many things happened; we played with Suppuration, Paradise Lost, Sonata Arctica, Division Alpha, Furia etc... We did so many shows in the past... Incredible tons of memories are hidden everywhere in my mind. Cannibal Corpse, Gamma Ray and Nightfall's shows were also pretty intense. MISANTHROPE on stage is Ultra Metal riffing like hell and unleashing the daemons fury. Vocals are ultimate from the deepest Black Metal guttural growl to emotional cries... On stage it is real action, 90 minutes of sweat and blood. You must invite us to come and play in your country it's easy, just e-mail me."

After almost 15 years of activity, I assume many ask when do you think it is the time you actually say farewell to this way of living, right? Like if there is a time for growing up to maturity… What would make a pertinent answer for this kind of question?

"For the moment I live the best years of my life with MISANTHROPE. This line-up is just perfect. It's not the moment to stop, I keep on selling tons of records, I play live very often, and I have fun and meet crazy people. This is a real part of my life. I still have so many things to do and say with MISANTHROPE... I'm sure that we will feast the 20 years of the band in 2009 eh eh eh. I want to re-conquer our lost throne. This is more comfortable than it has been in the first place for me."

And since we are here, at the longevity issue, tell me, which would be MISANTHROPE's philosophy? Perhaps you could explain the significance of the name and maybe the reason you chose it. Maybe you could tell me which was the thematic core you expressed all along this period of activity? As far as music is regarded, this band always played something atemporal…, no clichés, no trendy influences, which is of a great advantage as well as of a great risk. People, young people especially, prefer listening to trendy bands and, moreover, the melody seems to be now a sine qua non despite of virtuosity or else. Could we be rather too old or there is too much superficiality around… these days?

"MISANTHROPE philosophy is passion for Metal and a will to introduce to every listener of the band the grandiose and perfect past of the French country. What my ancestors did … I'm the remains of what has been built and thought in the past 2000 years. I'm spreading the memory and the culture of my old nice nation, kings and revolution. Now France is lost and almost dead artistically. It's a shame on the democrats and French government. A MISANTHROPE in Molière's (he is the one who created the word) way is the one who loves so much mankind that he is ready to leave him and stay alone far from him until human being will be enough true, courteous and human. Not fuckin anxious animals with no belief as man is nowadays with hate, anger and frustration. I really believe in those words. I leave outside this world; in my own world that I built since 12 years ago with my girl and friends. I live for the Metal and MISANTHROPE, many people joined us, we are numerous and proud of leaving of our passion and not being fake men in this world of TV frustration, fuck the TV, the system really sucks, I'm not a punk, you know that but it can't be that way. It destroyed so many things. Musically we never had enormous success, but we always got thousands people listening MISANTHROPE even since the split CD in 1991. It's great to be almost 15 years old and been a forever new band with new idea and real development. Young people listen what the chosen few ask them to listen to. We just have to teach them to go to My Dying Bride and Kadenzza instead of Linkin Park and Korn. The day will come... We are on the bottom of the wave but it will come back. The business makes almost everything; it's not the quality or the originality nowadays. Major have hands on the metal market; even Roadrunner & Spinefarm has been sold to Universal Music. There is almost no hope for independent company... The return to the Underground is the only solution."

I believe there is a track in which your father is featured. How come? Where from did you get this idea? I remember a similar thing happened with ORPHANED LAND's second album…

"Yes, he came for doing electricity in my house like every good father, I told him let's try your voice in the microphone and improvise. He said 'All my life, I built up my soon, in a dark romanticism, heretic aristocrat, followers of the black sun'. We did 3 takes and it came out that Way... as we say as father as son eh eh eh. It was excellent that Jean-Jacques told me that we can keep it for the album. Yes, you are right about Orphaned Land, but honestly I forgot about. I think when bands like MISANTHROPE & Orphaned Land we have so much connection with culture and history it's generally a family affair, not just an individual thought."

Well, here comes a common question I am afraid I cannot avoid. What is it that we should expect from MISANTHROPE for the future?

"You should expect us to be back to the throne and enjoying our brotherhood as much as possible. I want to keep on going with this line-up as much as possible, not just being there, make a CD every 2-3 years and then goodbye. It is really about being every day in the Metal, in all its forms it's my real goal; I like music and Metal production."

ARGILE is just another project of yours and J.J's and, featuring a mixture of Heavy with Doom Metal yet in a more atmospheric version, has made its debut last year. Tell me about the feedback. I am curious if people still listen to this style as I find it rather placed in nostalgia than in the present days…

"Argile is a real Band, our second band. We made an album in 4 years; we hope to make a new one in 2006... We will see… MISANTHROPE eats our time. The feed-

back was excellent, Avantgarde Doom Death like in the good old days of the early 1990. It's for me a MISANTHROPE album between 'Miracles totem Taboo and '1666... Theatre Bizarre' mixed with a tribute album to Celtic Frost's 'Into the Pandemonium'. Yes, many people are into it, of course it's really more underground that MISANTHROPE but you find people really into Argile and not into MISANTHROPE at all. It's funny for me because I do not see so many differences. Same members, Fredman studio, same label and stuff from the second period of MISANTHROPE. It's nice to offer something different. I listen to a lot of '80 early '90 Metal, I love nostalgia, I hate Retro, but nostalgia is smooth and cold. This is fine for me."

Do you plan to release another album with ARGILE?

"We almost compose it, 3 songs still remains to be finished, but we are unfortunately not able to record it before 2006. So time shall tell. I really want to do few gigs to promote that second CD. So, we must be ready."

I have heard many rumors regarding CLAY. Unfortunately, I know not too many about it.

"Argile is me, what I like deeply. MISANTHROPE is a super band in which I'm into, has success and love. I think this is simply like this."

Let us cover the other activity of yours next to Severine, Holy Records, which seems to be pretty important as well. How is it to be the boss?

"We both own the company, it's nice, gives a lot of stress but fruits are tasty when at the end you live in your world and for the Metal. There is no real boss, we are a team, it makes nothing special because we have done almost only Holy Records in our life."

Which would be the criteria that guide you when you offer a deal to a band? Which were the best sold albums so far (how many copies?)? And the worst?

"The worst is around 1300 copies and the best is Elend "Les ténèbres du dehors" around 24.000 copies. In 1995 every CD was sold in a minimum of 4000-8000 copies, now you can cut this really down. To be signed in you just have to bring something new and be terribly good with your instruments and production. Power, originality and feeling are the points."

SEPTIC FLESH was an etalon for Holy yet you broke up with them. Why? Hammerheart invested pretty much trust into them and it seems that it wasn't a failure since their last album was quite a big success. So it happened with ELEND… and maybe this will be the future for ON THORNS I LAY…, see Black Lotus Records…

"We didn't brake up, the deal was over, we had not enough money to continue with them. They went to the one who could pay. We want to be realistic with the investment and the sales. If it's disconnected, we have to find a solution. If there is no solution then… goodbye. Their latest album is brilliant, but SEPTIC FLESH split up, a stange happening indeed. This happened to Elend, but they are back on Holy since two years ago. Music for Nations has been a disaster for them. Black Lotus has fun to take back all the good old Holy bands, Nightfall, On Thorns I Lay, The poor 1991 demo of Septic Flesh etc... I wish them good luck. I really prefer to see Orphaned Land on Century Media. With their new album 'Mabool' they will destroy everything."

Tell me, if you were to choose, which would be the bands you would definitely enjoy signing a contract? What new acquisitions were completed? Can you tell me about future releases?

"Séverine wishes to sign with Paradise Lost and I with Celtic Frost eh eh eh. We just signs Kadenzza from Japan, Frozen Shadows from Canada and Garwall from France. For 2004 we have planned new Rajna, debut of Frozen Shadows, new Gloomy Grim, debut of Garwall, 15 years box of MISANTHROPE, new Elend, New Natron, New Soulgrind etc..".

There are many interpretations next to the bands who are promoted by "personal" labels… if you know what I mean… Well it is the case of MISANTHROPE as well. How do you comment such? Are there any advantages?

"We almost always been on Holy Records, yes it's good, sometime it's very hard to explain to the other members, but it's overall great. You can see what is really happening behind the curtain, it's a real reflection of the mirror. You keep the head on the shoulders and check easily errors and good points. Royalties are never late ah ah ah."

Roberto (Avantgarde Music/MONUMENTUM) makes (in Kogaionon #6) a controversial statement: "I wonder who would sign MISANTHROPE for example, if their man wouldn't be the label boss of Holy Records". What do you think about such? It sounds rather malicious, don't you think? By the way, in time, haven't you received some other offers from different labels?

"Ah, Roberto is so weird sometimes; he hates me or is it for arrogance then? Well, in 2003, MISANTHROPE with 'Sadistic Sex Daemon' has been the best sale of the label. That's a good reason I think I talked with many labels for European license, but they always have the same answer, they want as well the French market for MISANTHROPE eh eh eh and Holy keeps the French market obviously."

As it happens with each field, music means as well a business and marketing and promotion simply are the key of



success, either we like it or not and usually to the detriment of quality music. If we add fashion in this equation, then the result is more than clear. How do you think it happened for the Underground bands to reach the same functionality in this metropolitan system?

"There is underground and business, we are independent underground label and artist… creator of what will be tomorrow U.G. business. Success is not the point, passion and equality is the matter of our job."

If you were the president of your country what would be the first and important things you would like to change or improve? Would you return to the national currency instead of Euro?

"No, I like euro, it's great, when I go to Holland buying laughing cigarettes it's really easier ah ah ah. I really prefer drinking' champagne and wine than smoking'. If I'm president I would like to stop all the shit from the French TV and to teach all our children how to read since they do not know what is a book and I will teach them music and how to develop their head in musical creation as well, today's children do not know how to create their own world."

Philippe, tell me something about you: age, family, children, hobbies, religion…how is it a regular day of your life?

"I'm born in Saint Denis (where Louis the XVI and Marie Antoinette are buried) the 15-04-1970, I have two big brothers and my parents are still alive. I live as you know with Séverine and we started together Holy in late 1991 straight after school. We have no children, no pets, and a German car. I like reading, painting and all kind of art is our hobbies, I'm Catholic Christian from my parents, and I like the ritual... But it's sometime a little hard to be part of a religion especially in 2004... And I love food. I wake up at 7am, make my daily things start Holy at 9am be back home at 20 pm eat, go to Paris meeting MISANTHROPE boys staying 3-4 ours together rehearsing, going to a gig, watching a kung fu movie or just talking... back home have a good book and sleep a little less than 6 hours."

Where do you place yourself in the next five years?

"I don't want to change anything until 2009. Then we will see. I will maybe move somewhere else down in South of France. Here at 65 km from Paris it's really cold."

What albums did fascinate you lately? Movies?

"This noon I watched the 3rd part of the 'Lord of the Ring', cool fights, it reminded me a lot Philippe Druillet-Gustave Flaubert Comic Book Salemmbo. Hero from China directed by Zhang Yimou was Brilliant as well. I enjoyed the best of rerecorded and remastered of Running Wild, new Dimmu Borgir, new Gojira, new King Diamond and new Scarve."

If I was to visit France, what would you recommend to visit, except Eiffel and Louvru?

"Notre Dame de Paris, The Sacred Heart, Saint Denis basilica (where Louis the XVI and Marie Antoinette are buried), and all the beautiful country side full of castles and ancient medieval architecture."

Philippe, I do appreciate for this interview. I wish you success and good luck in everything you do and may we hear soon of each other. Yet, tell me what does it mean: Hypocondrium Force? Do you think that life really is a perpetual war?

"Thanks a lot for this ultimate interview, there is 15 years of my life inside, it took me 3 nights to type it, many private things are inside, use it for a good will. Hypocondrium Force is the MISANTHROPE fans horde all over the world, so join us now. Cheers, enjoy life... our war is our music, on our stage, in the pit and inside our lyrics. Try one day listen to something else than what they ask you to do. Underground is our world, we won't disappoint it. Thanks for your support. Keep the faith and believe only in what you experienced, in nothing else."

January 2004



Elend

After five years of silence and... peace, the return of Austrian-French band, ELEND, with an album rather experimental than orchestral, had practically simply shaken down the actual scene so that the ideas of these two talented musicians were over-interpreted and twisted in any possible and spicy manner throughout dozens of interviews. My guest, today, is Renaud Tschirner and I am sure he would actually experience the required patience to trespass again through Kogaionon's "ring of fire"-meaning a huge amount of questions!

Hi Renaud and welcome on Kogaionon realm after almost 7 years of absence. Tell me, how does Renaud look like today? Is he that much different from whom I've met in 1996?

"There is really not much to tell. I don't have the feeling that much is changed."

There are rumours leading to an imminent leaving, moving perhaps...at least until the spring. Are you leaving Austria?

"I am spending a few months in France for work matters; ELEND among them".

It is rather odd that you've chosen the name almost 10 years ago as it was in a complete concordance with Officium Tenebrarum trilogy. Well, the first trilogy completed itself in 1998 and for the moment you've entered another trilogy... Tell me, is there any connection this time as well? Isn't it somehow rather an anachronistic term for your new musical orientation? Or is it just a matter of image and marketing and nothing more or less?

"We chose the name in accordance with what we intended to set up in this area of our common work. We wouldn't release albums under the same name if we didn't believe that the music was still one with the original idea."

In 1994, Holy Records had announced signing with an avant-garde band dedicated to Gothic Dark Symphonic, remember? Well, your debut quite shocked the entire Metal scene even if you never entered the Metal sphere (to be perfectly sincere I actually can't see any connection with Gothic either...but this is another discussion...). Tell me, why do you think you were assimilated by this scene? Could it be that you were promoted by a Metallic label?

"Well, this is very likely. Certain aspects of the music we write for ELEND seem to appeal to the audiences you just mentioned."

The first chapter of the trilogy gathered an amazing success and "leçons de ténèbres" had become in reality a sample of "unexpected" and so far unknown music. I am so curious, how do you see the album now, after so many years?

"The first album, as you know, was not intended for release; we didn't even have a record label. But Holy Records visited us while we were mixing it, decided they were interested, paid us back the studio costs and released the recording soon afterwards. There was no risk involved for them; the production costs were very low, so even if the album hadn't sold much, they wouldn't have lost money with it. We sometimes believe it really should not have been released in this state, there are too many imperfections. But there is some kind of freshness to it, which makes it quite charming."

It is no mystery that "les ténèbres du dehors" had indeed outstandingly impressed the Metal scene and I sometimes think that the reason might be associated to the sound of the strings, which perfectly reproduce the guitar riffs. Why do you think this album stroke in such incredible manner? In your eyes, was this album better than the first? It is true... this album brought you a great chance like signing with MFN... right?

"I am still not sure what made Music for Nations interested in ELEND... This was the time when they started to turn to bands not only rooted in Metal. Maybe the name of our musical project was spreading and beginning to sound familiar, and our image probably carried some cachet, too. The intended affinity to metal in some passages may have been another reason, as you have suggested. This type of transposing Metal riffs to a classical instrumentation was so obvious and overdue in my opinion. Many bands flirting with Metal and Symphonic elements have attempted to do a similar thing since then; I am neither saying that we influenced them, nor that our result was more successful: this potential just had to be realized sooner or later. It has probably been dealt more thoroughly since then; we just happened to do this before everybody else. But this album is certainly not 'better' than the first; the production is the perfect definition of a catastrophe. The pieces of music are imperfect, although I am still impressed with their exuberance of ideas."

I must confess, at the beginning I found extremely peculiar and indeed awkward, if not cheap as well, the idea of releasing a material in lack of aggressive male voices. Remixing and re-mastering of the tracks saved and



promoted, in the long run, a convenient image. It was so close to have been considered as a purely financial strategy but so it came "weeping nights". It wasn't a part of the trilogy and I would risk myself by telling it actually was a nice farewell "gift" that you've granted Holy Records with, probably in the name of an elegant goodbye. What was it actually supposed or intended to be this album? Looking back over the years, tell me, did this album reach its initial purpose?

"Holy Records had released the first two albums and thought that the music and the female vocals on the second one disappeared underneath too many layers of screams. So they insisted on re-releasing a kind of softer version of that album, i.e., without male vocals. There was not much we could do. But we did one thing: since we believed that this was a big joke on the audience, we decided to write new pieces of music, deliberately in a softer vein than those of the Officium, to match the new 'light' versions of 'Les ténèbres du dehors', and to provide a kind of calm before the storm that was to come with 'The Umbersun'. We did not have much time, since we were already at work on 'The Umbersun', so there is actually only one composition entirely written by us among the three new tracks, namely 'Weeping Night'. 'The Embrace' is an adaptation of a Purcell song (as far as the music is concerned), the lyrics are ours. And 'O Solitude' is a famous Purcell piece. 'Weeping Nights' is a full length album, but we like to call it a mini-album, to emphasize that it should not really count as a long player."

Having a contract with a big label does not necessarily mean one can be the master of all advantages. Your case is pretty often and unfortunately the case of many small bands who don't take benefit of a similar promotion as big famous bands do even if they "share" the same label/services. Do you think I am wrong if I say that your experience with MFN was a complete failure?

"It was certainly not a 'complete' failure. We wouldn't have been able to record 'The Umbersun' if we hadn't been signed to Music for Nations."

I've noticed you actually reached a period of tremendous focalization on lots of interviews right after the release of trilogy's last opus, "The Umbersun". Well, despite such, the album did not sell that good and then the MFN severance followed, even if you had a contract for at least four albums. There was a good attitude and a quite supportive appreciation coming from mass-media for this album as it was very highly quoted yet...there was "something rotten in Denmark"...can you make light in this chapter?

"We should respect the fact that big companies have obligations and needs the single artist cannot always agree with. The problem with the sales is linked to Music for Nations' distribution partners rather than to Music for Nations themselves. And I think that the CD market was already beginning to fall apart at that time."

On the other hand, I believe this album was perceived rather too vaguely and perhaps there were notes of confusion, deep darkness, maybe violence and complexity in the sound, which finally turned out as a great disadvantage. At least, this is my personal analysis. I found extremely awkward to have heard that lots of fans of extreme music, actually pretty well acquainted with various and exaggerated musical experiences, accused this album as being too violent. Wouldn't be rather a conspicuous paradox?

"Probably. This would show rather nicely how 'extreme' the fans of self-termed 'extreme' music really are. But I am not taking any remarks coming from such an audience seriously. Among the people who are willing to listen to The Umbersun, I assume that even if many will find it difficult and suffocating, they will be able to appreciate it for what it's worth."

After such album, I wondered if there was something to be conceived and done in the same manner...as I had the feeling the climax was attained. Any continuance might have led you to repeating yourselves and few chances of survival would have marked your way. You've announced ELEND's "retirement" and everybody seemed to have accepted as a fact (moreover, the trilogy had been accomplished!). After 4 years of deep silence, here comes the bomb: the band is reunited! What happened? That was a real renewal!

"It is possible to go much further than 'The Umbersun', but not with the same kind of orchestration, or means of expression. The work on the project subsequent to this album is still not completed; this is why there have not been any releases for quite some time. While we pursued our common work without publishing it, we began splitting it up into distinct entities, and ELEND emerged again."

And how did you come to sign with Prophecy? I know you have always kept a good and cordial relationship with Holy, the label who firstly promoted and supported you, why didn't you sign with Holy again? Philippe did intensely promote you during this year, in France, yet your official label is the German one.

"Wrong, Prophecy Productions are not our official label. They are only one of our three license partners on the European territory. Holy are our licensees on the French market. If you are a CD collector you can try to get all the different editions of the album available."

You've always said that your main sources of inspiration were: extreme Metal music and the serious music. What is the meaning of "serious music" in your acceptance: classical, symphonic? And there was something about "re-evaluating the musical violence", which quite intrigued me, could you be more specific?

"The term 'serious music' is not our invention. It is what



the French would call 'musique savante' ('learned' music), or what the Germans call 'ernste Musik', in opposition to 'Unterhaltungsmusik' (entertainment music). 'Classical' is not the right term; I know it is commonly being used for what we mean, but this is simply wrong: it denotes a specific period and style within serious music. As to the matter of musical violence, I believe it has been commented upon often enough."

If for the first trilogy these sources of inspiration were pretty credible, I believe now we can put on your line some influences coming from Dark/Industrial/Ambient. Are you fond of CMI bands? Projekt, Fluttering? Have you found a new path or direction to explore?

"We had already started to experiment extensively with noises at the time of 'The Umbersun', but since that album was still set in the context of the Officium and its musical survey of the Western symphonic tradition, we had to keep to certain instrumental norms; we had to restrain ourselves and didn't violate them too much. We have been aware of Cold Meat Industry and other Industrial labels of course, but I can't say that the bands they feature are anything like an influence for us. CMI is a cult label; it has to be respected for that. But except for a few bits and pieces here and there I don't find their releases very interesting. Most of them are boring, and far from inventive or violent. What we integrate into our sound is more related to noise, or anti-music, than to the ambience sounds and unsurprising compositions of this scene, which also involves a dimension we vehemently refuse to subscribe to ideologically. I can understand the comparison between the Industrial elements of ELEND and those of the CMI kind, however, because their use is not really common in popular music. But our affinities really lie in the domain of contemporary serious music; Henry or Xenakis for example."

I do admit that "Winds devouring men" did strike me! I was expecting you to come in forth with something... new, changed...but this was a completely new dimension and it left me speechless and, no kidding, mute! Moreover, I found that the symphonic dimension took an underground place, the aggressive voices completely disappeared, the classical music touch faded away in a pale aura while the whole sound entered the realm of a bizarre soundtrack! Do you think I am wrong?

"I have never liked the comparison between ELEND and film soundtracks; I understand it, of course, as much as I understand the comparison with the Industrial scene, but this apparent similitude is only connected to matters of instrumentation, and this is really not enough. There are fundamental differences, and they are rather simple to comprehend: first of all, music for film is intended as a sonic accompaniment for the film's visual dimension; although it can be listened to independently, its goal is to submit to the film; it is supposed to emphasise the audience's emotional reaction to the scenes on the screen, whereas the music of ELEND has a narrative function and creates inner images without the help of other, external, images. Even from a purely technical point of view there are other obvious differences: soundtracks mainly focus on themes, leitmotifs and variations, which have to stay fragmentary through their assimilation to the film; the music of ELEND is structurally different: each ELEND album, and each composition within it, is an independent piece of music, with a specific structure, a dramatic development. And what do you make of the lyrics? Show me a feature film (not a music video) with continuous lead vocals..."

From the very beginning, the first time I "met" ELEND, I had the feeling that orchestral amplitude was of a great importance in the sound. Up to me, ELEND is or was the perfect balance between violence and beauty and definitely not necessarily in a contradictory shape! Do you think that we can speak of a concept related to contrast as a main characteristic of your music?

"Yes; contrast, tension."

A friend of mine, really fond of your music, in a deep manner, has some specific questions for you, let's make some light for him: " Almost each and single reviews I managed to read via internet, regarding your last material, makes a straight reference to the sound of DEAD CAN DANCE. For a simple resemblance of voices as it is, I found absolutely unjustified this comparison! ELEND never sounded in DEAD CAN DANCE style and moreover, if ever compared, the great difference is the complexity of ELEND sound and concept structure. Is there any deliberate connection between the actual sound of ELEND and the sound of the band (if I am not wrong you actually mentioned something about it in some interviews!)?"

"I can understand why people keep comparing both bands, but I don't think that it does justice to any of us: the state of the popular music scene is such that all the parts that drop out of it are immediately thrown together, especially when there are apparent similarities in their musical approach. But as a matter of fact, you already mentioned the main difference yourself: the intention, the style, the sound are simply not the same, the pieces of music are not structured in the same way at all; Dead Can Dance have concerned themselves with other matters than we have; they are not interested in dramatic tension or violence, for instance."

"I've read in a recent interview (available on Prophecy site) about you declared orientation to the musical violence and even more I sensed a deep and indeed profound relationship with this concept. "Violence" word obsessively runs all over this interview and I believe I understand the connection you made with Officium Tenebrarum theme but where from this promotion of a perpetual violence, especially in "Winds devouring men" or in the 2 future chapters? As a simple listener, there was no shade of violence or aggression in this material, none that I could accept in the usual acceptance of the word/concept. Is there a promise? Or simply a different approach?"

"To get this straight: do you think that 'Les ténèbres du dehors' is a violent album? Do you think that any of the Officium CDs are violent albums? If yes, why? The screams? The pseudo-metal-riffs? The brass explosions? What about the Industrial outbursts on 'Winds Devouring Men'?

I have said this before: I personally think that some passages with layers of dissonant strings, rhythmical elements and distorted noises are the most violent ones we have ever made. But the point is that they are merely outbursts: they are unexpected and surprising, but will not trouble the listener too long. I think this is the main change compared to the previous work: nothing on 'The Umbersun' was really 'surprising'. Once you entered the flux with the first piece it brought you to utter destruction like in a programmed ride; very brutal of course, but very predictable.

There are many ways to deal with musical violence, and they don't always have to be the most obvious. You should never forget that the main concern of both ELEND composers is the idea of musical tension. The next album, maybe the next two, will be faster and a lot more violent than 'Winds Devouring Men'. But you have to keep in mind that this new cycle does not work according to the rules of the Officium; we are not employing the same method. The Officium was intended as a torrent that flows towards utmost darkness with rising speed. The structure of the new cycle will only become more obvious when all its parts will have been released."

Yes, these were pretty pertinent questions. Let's enter again the ring of fire! Can you still follow me? Ok!



Although the album is completely different in regard of the previous ones, I still find there is similitude. The tracks' structure embraces a more "digestible" approach, the percussion is more active and there is even a change in rhythm section but overall the essence seems to be the same. What else would you add to my sayings regarding this album sound?

"I don't know. I could talk a great deal about technical details, the choices we made in recording and mixing, but this will probably not interest the readers a lot. I am glad that you seem to notice, after all, that the essence of the project is still there, despite the obvious changes. This will hopefully make your doubts about the term 'ELEND' redundant."

Iskandar Hasnawi has written the lyrics for this album and it seems like there is a change in lyrics as well. Lucifer has been replaced with inner search/quest, while personal issues were harmoniously entwined with Ancient Greek lyric poetry (Homer) and in addition there are some side-real journeys and visions, death, time and oblivion. Will you land me the inner significance of such (perhaps making direct reference to the 11 tracks)? Does Milton still preserve the same importance for you? At the beginning of ELEND, "paradise lost" was a leading point…

"It's not quite correct to say that Milton was of such an importance to ELEND. There were references to Paradise Lost on the first album, as a sort of exposition for our cycle, that's all. What you can say, I guess, is that ELEND has always contained many references to the Western literary tradition, and, specifically in the Officium, to Christian theology and philosophy. The lyrics were interwoven with many images and personal references that are alien to this tradition. Our cycle was a personal interpretation of one of the founding myths of the Western cultural imagination. We took many liberties with biblical or theological texts. You could even call it a dreamt mythology; and thus, there is not such a great distance to what we are doing on 'Winds Devouring Men'."

Your first trilogy had as basis the catholic ceremony and here from… people associated, partially or not, ELEND with religion and its manifestation. Your fundamental concept might be interpreted in many different ways, but I would be thrilled to know if it was a genuine belief that moved you or it simply marked a purely theoretical modus operandi? Or… let's put it in a different view… do you find yourselves as religious persons?

"You could read the lyrics of the Officium as Iskandar Hasnawi's logbook of his struggles against the Christian religion, if you wish."

As it was proven during the centuries, religion has played a great part (and it will as well!) in all centres of influence of our quotidian life and the consequence to such was horrible: major conflicts, wars, victims….What do you think of what is happening now in the world (Jews against Palestinians, Americans against Iraqis…and so on…)? Do you find near or imminent a third world war?

"I don't think this is of any relevance for this interview."

In Austria, the right direction imposes a strong impact over the population and nostalgic extremist people (Hitler's fans) are more and more active. Where do you place yourself? Do you have any specific political beliefs? Do you believe in elitism?

"The problem in Austria is that there is no real 'Left' left. But once again, I don't see the point in talking about politics in an interview about the music I happen to produce with a couple of other people."

ELEND had always had a certain status of composition: you and Iskandar but starting with 1997, Sébastien Roland joined you as a sound engineer. How do you get along in this "trinity"? Where do the symbiosis end and the compromise begin? I assume you have different strong personalities, probably dissimilar musical visions or simply different perceptions and thinking… there must be someone to have the last word, the final decision in his hands regarding the band. Or is it otherwise? Moreover, you are hundreds km away from each other and you live in different countries…

"Sébastien Roland is not involved in the process of composition, so the situation has been the same for us since the very beginning: everything is decided between both founders of the project. The distance is no hindrance for our work, we have always collaborated like this; we are used to it."

Have you tried a tiny feeling of panic that your fans might take this new album with some reticence? ELEND was never a band to follow any sort of musical trend or fashion and, no matter how flattering and awesome it sounds, this might cause some prejudices… Gothic is a fashion

and so is melodious Rock, brutal materials have lost their fans and interest but there is something amazing about Dark enthusiasts: they will always be open minded towards NEW and QUALITY, don't you think?

"I don't know. The very notion of a 'dark community', whatever that may be, seems like a restriction to me."

Eve Gabrielle Siskind has left after the first release, but Nathalie Barbary has always been supportive and right besides you and she is gifted with such an adorable voice…it seems like her place in the ELEND alchemy is sealed forever, either you frankly agree or not. Tell me, why don't you consider her as an equal part of ELEND structure? Do I sense a sort of misogynist attitude?

"Are you serious? There is a fundamental difference between a composer, or author, and an interpreter. You can be both of course, such as in ELEND, but as long as you participate as a mere instrumentalist or vocalist your role is limited to that precisely. Nathalie is not interested at all in the process of creation. If she was, we would not necessarily ignore her contributions, but she would definitely not have any of the final decisions. Anyway, we have never had any tense situation where she disagreed with our work. This is also one of the reasons why she has stayed with us since 1995: she knows she can expect music she will appreciate. This particular situation is the same with all our musicians; it is agreed upon by all participants in the project, male or female."

A new soprano, Esteri Rémond, stands out in the secondary plan, besides a talented violinist, David Kempf, and Klaus Amann (trumpet, horn, and trombone). This secondary plan was a specific element of the organic sound of ELEND and actually always played a huge role. Should I understand this is a formula to keep for the future as well?

"Yes. These are musicians we have known for quite some time now, and some of them are involved in one or another of our various musical projects, depending on the specific needs of the instrumentation. You should think of them as a pool of musicians we can contact whenever we need them. They are not exclusively linked to us of course, so sometimes they are not available; thus, slight changes in the usual recording personnel can take place."

Tell me, where from did the idea of Industrial landscapes and noises come? I am sure the "guilty" ones are you and Simon Eberl…

"We are constantly searching for unconventional modes of expression. Industrial noises per se don't count as a 'new' device, but their combination with symphonic elements has not satisfactorily been achieved so far, in our opinion. We are much concerned with the blending of opposites, as you have justly remarked, and noises were one possibility of extending our domain of work to areas we hadn't touched before. At the time of The Umbersun we couldn't really explore this path, as I have indicated above.
The major part of the Industrial samples on Winds Devouring Men was recorded in a Metal embossing factory in Austria. We recorded workers on their machines and also used some of the machinery available there in unconventional ways; some of the sounds thus recorded were later re-designed on the computer. Apart from that, we record whatever we believe to be interesting; ambience sounds we happen to come across or unconventional noises we produce on our own with devices we construct for this specific purpose."

I didn't "hear" you so far intending to bring guitars in ELEND sound. Why not? Do they sound that disorientated and distorted? I know you used to appreciate Extreme Death Metal bands and in such… guitars were in power of quite a significant importance…

"You will probably be surprised to hear this, but we did use distorted guitars on this album; not in the way a Metal band would use them, though. There is no subtlety in the Metal guitar. Its use would be out of place in ELEND's sound."

You can be proud of your own studio, The Fall. I assume it is much comfortable psychically and physically to produce and release an album under these terms…, right? Was it a huge investment as I assume it meant quite a big effort for you?

"It certainly was an important investment, but hardly noticeable, since we really took our time. We started purchasing equipment at the time of the first album, approximately."

There is a dream inside each musician's heart: to reach the day when he can play besides an orchestra and choruses on various voices but this is rather a utopia for these times (financial reasons!). Well, there is magic around you…since for "The Umbersun" you actually had such great opportunity… can you tell me about it?

"We are not unfamiliar with working with orchestral ensembles, you know. We spent much time in our youth doing that. The difference is that for your own recordings you have to convince the ensemble to participate, and pay the performers. As an accredited composer you could get state subventions. But our situation is far too unorthodox. The budget we got from Music for Nations was calculated to include the performance of a renowned professional British choir. They specialise in modern composers and are quite open-minded, so they accepted to collaborate without any trouble. The producer we worked with on the recording of 'The Umbersun' had worked with them before, that is why we managed to get in touch with them in the first place."

I understood that your next 2 albums, which shall complete the new trilogy, are supposed to be released in a couple of years and you spoke about more violence and more expressiveness. How do you intend to bring these two together? Can you tell me about these two materials…about sound, lyrics or line up… everything that you presume to happen….

"No; I would prefer not to talk too much about things that are still under way."

People talk already about the three projects of yours. Trip hop (A POISON TREE), Dark Industrial (Statues) or Avantgarde Orchestral (ENSEMBLE ORPHIQUE). I would like to know more about them! I actually understood there are some musicians who feature both in these projects and in ELEND on secondary plan….

"These related projects have not yet been released. Two of those are collaborations of both ELEND composers which have crystallized during the last years and which will maybe be issued in the near future: Ensemble Orphique was to be our common project subsequent to the completion of the 'Officium Tenebrarum'. In contrast to ELEND this music involves a more ambitious kind of writing music. It means a lot of work and really should be seen against the background of contemporary serious music or sound research. The music goes far beyond what we initiated on 'The Umbersun' and thus might not please the average listener very much. 'Statues' is a very violent matter, it allows us to deal with musical violence per se. Apart from that, we also work independently from each other, in diverse styles. The musicians we collaborate with include those that played on 'Winds Devouring Men'."

You have two web sites but none is available…

"Technical problems; the server was down. We are currently setting them up again."

I want you to try to recommend me some good music that you recently listened to. Do you still enjoy Metal? Should I expect other collaborations with Austrian bands as you had with KOROVAKILL? There are some talented musicians there such as Richard Lederer (DVKE); could you name others who gained your respect and appreciation?

"I am sorry, I don't know this scene well. Korova was another matter: the band leader is a long time friend and a great inventor, regarding both music and text. He seems to have retired from music altogether now. I can understand him: it may be really depressing to come up with original ideas, not have them recognized in their own time and witness them being shamelessly stolen by others later; others who get the credit for them."

You've performed only once live during the ten years of musical activity, do you think there are any chances we might see/hear you next year at Treffen Leipzig? Could we speak about an ELEND show (lights, pyrotechnical effects, dramatic plays or ballet)?

"Although we have been thinking about it, this will very probably not happen. I don't see how we could finance a live performance in a concert hall that would please us."

You are rather obsessed with red and black…I may say from a first glance. The last two albums "exploded" in expressing this combination. Is it solely a coincidence or do these colours mean something in particular?

"That's a coincidence. Every album has its own logic, its own needs."

How does Romania look like seen from a Europe corner? Did you know that Vienna's Philharmonic was conducted by a Romanian?

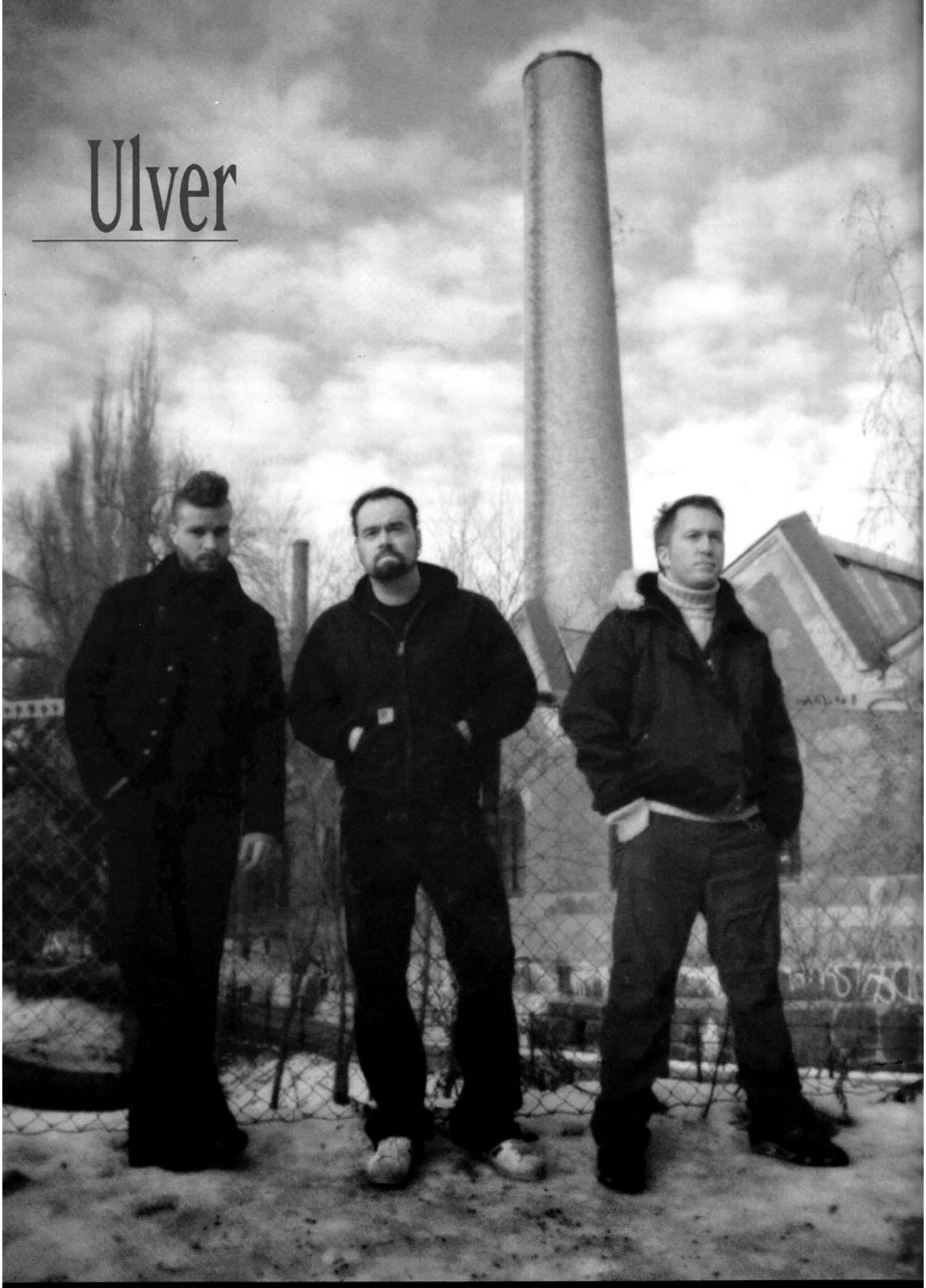
"I've never had the opportunity to visit the country, unfortunately. Cioran is well known, of course, but I fear that most Western Europeans have only really been aware of Romania since the fall of Ceausescu."

Do wings really devour men?

"That depends on your poetic sense."

December 2003

Ulver



Kristoffer Garm Rygg aka Trickster G. is one of the most respected Metal musicians in Norway even if for quite some long time now he gave up composing or listening to Metal. By entering and exploring new dimensions more abstract and experimental, Garm actually created a new aura for his project, ULVER, succeeding thus to perplex his audience. He is well known both for his performance in ARCTURUS and his very label, Jester, which is a record company promoting post Modern materials of genuine weirdness. Well, I must confess it was in my desire and a must to include inside my magazine an interview with such an enigmatic character. For such desire to become true I had ask for help from an old friend of mine, Norwegian, by the way, Roy Kristensen, and this was because Kris is a very-very busy person and he approves interviews... but solely by telephone...

Well, I am afraid such wouldn't have allowed me the freedom I wanted and neither the chance to have completed a detailed and elegant interview. Therefore, Roy agreed to collaborate (well, I write for Imhotep as well... am I not!? he, he...) and here it is my wish come true! Moreover, I must confess, ULVER's soundtrack, "Svidd Neger", indeed stroke me... right into my heart! This material is, no doubt, an authentic jewel, a great album!!!! "Waltz Of King", "Comedawn" or "Wildcat" are amazing tracks, by far absolutely outstanding!

The interview is structured in two chapters; first was conceived by Sauli Vuoti (a basic collaborator of Imhotep) almost two years ago... which makes of it an old material...but it was never published so far and it has the merit of surprising Kriss with some provocative and incendiary statements, mostly gravitating on "Perdition City" album. Well, a few years later those statements are called off by no one else but himself! Second chapter was conceived and conducted by Roy, in the last days of January 2004 especially for Kogaionon!

In other words, you have the chance to enter ULVER universe by comparison: past (two years ago!) and present...

Have a nice time reading it!

Part I – by Sauli Vuoti

Ulver is quite a concept, and Garm (aka Trickster G.) a misunderstood genius in my opinion. Being mentally kicked in the head by the brainless metal audience, *Ulver* still strives for a greater cause, on their own. They have created some truly unbelievable music during the way. Although I managed to piss of the master with my arrogant opinions and unjustified comments, here's what Trickster G. had to say.

"Perdition City"

Hello Rastaman Garm! Many black metal fellows claim to enjoy winter a great deal, but how is the winter in Oslo for you?

"It's allright. Our creativity is usually at a high this time of the year. I'd say we're privileged to be able to enjoy four completely very distinct seasons while others merely have one monotonous season, summer all the year type of thing. You appreciate the sun more after several months of freezing cold, dark and miserable weather."

How are you then?

"I'm stable. I have a thousand ongoing projects. Not much time I'm afraid."

Your new album "Perdition City" just got out. The stuff on it is rather original; it reminds me of Pink Floyd.

"I can see what you mean; although the music of Pink Floyd is very organic. Our music is more based on technology, but I can see the parallels."

Do you use drugs too?

"Not during composition, but yes we have taken them. As far as I can remember I have always chased the other side, alternate perceptions of reality and so forth. It is easier to get in touch with those states while on certain drugs, but I don't recall messing up during composion. And I don't use any hard psychotropics anymore. I've experienced the ecstacy, but also the fear... too much of it. The bottle is still my friend whenever need to numb the paranoia. The occasional nose-blow, you know. Party stuff."

How would you describe your music yourself?

"I don't know. Imagine a mix of modern electronics, contemporary music and post-rock, it would probably sound quite like Ulver."

In my opinion the the entire booklet and the pictures are fantastic. Where did you get the idea to take the listener on a trip to "Perdition City"?

"The title is a metaphor... like a contemporary Babylon of sorts. A friend of mine, Bård Torgersen aka Lord Bård, who mainly writes books these days but who is also into the photographic arts once showed me his rather extensive portfolio documenting urban decay. I just felt like it really captured the starkness of our music. We sat down together and flipped through literally thousands of his photos while listening to the album. We tried to put the pictures together as if they were telling a story. Some sort of narrative to the album. The photos are kind of anti-aesthetic and documentary. It goes hand in hand with our non-glamorous conception of "Perdition City"."

What do you mean by "soundtrack to an interior film"?

"We mean just that; that it's music for the inner eye. But I guess it could also apply to the external world. Imagine the music coming from a radio station in your car driving alone around town at night. Only you know where the hell you are. How many other cars and lost souls out there have tuned in to the same station?"

Your previous recording, "Metamorphosis" EP caused quite a stir.

"Well, it was all electronic, at times even techno."

How did you end up with this result, considering music?

"When we work in the studio, weird things just happen."

You seem to drift further away from metal music, and your process of creating a song sounds quite radical.

"We don't drift away from metal, we are long gone."

However your William Blake themed album contained rock a bit.

"That's true, it was like a step over the threshold."

And what kind of audience may this new album be directed towards, I suspect not to the purist metal audience?

"I think many of the people who are into all that dark and evil metal stuff are searching for something, how can I put it; secret or esoteric. I think they could find that in our music as well, so it might suit some of those people, but I can't say whether it is directed at someone in particular."

The album however is not easy listening...

"No, it's not. I'm not interested in moving the masses."

"In my opinion, black metal is dead."

Are you intending to make any metal music in the future?

"No, although how should I know? My plans are always fucked over by something in the process. I don't see Ulver doing metal music anytime soon, but the next Acrturus album will be a metal album. It will probably be the last that genre will hear from me for a good while. After that I'm not going to touch metal music with a stick. My interest in metal music has never been lower, so I'm not sure I could create anything of high quality anymore. I want to experiment with different styles and sounds. I never listen to black metal, it has lost most of its value to me. I don't listen to much metal anymore either, albeit some albums never quite leave me. It depends on the mood, you know; when in decadent mode it's always cool with a couple of tunes by Danzig, The Cult, Roky Erickson & the Aliens or something like that. Black Sabbath ... Sludgy, rockin' stuff. Yeah, and I love the fucked up stuff like Frank Zappa, Mr. Bungle, John Zorn etc. Black metal was interesting many years ago, before the pseudo-commercial form it has taken today. Most black metal bands have ended up as something quite similar to the bands they started out rebelling against. The new album of Dimmu Borgir might be technically brilliant and they are good musicians and all that, but in the end it's not going to hit the mainstream due to the very nature of the music. I just belong to a time when it was all very underground and motivated by other forces, so the real black metal is dead in my opinion. I can't relate to the new stuff those guys are up to. It's all bubblegum stuff these days."

I bet many black metallers will get your point, but why move to an electronic field?

"For me it was the next natural channel for expressing myself."

Are you totally against metal then?

"I wouldn't say I'm against it, it just doesn't interest me anymore. I have no need to make enemies in the metal scene. I still have many friends who play metal. I just don't share their tastes in music. My friends respect that and I respect them."

Would no changes convince you to get interested in metal again?

"Goddamn, give it a break will you."

What do you think of the fact that so many people have been inspired by your music?

"I guess our first albums influenced people, maybe because we were at the right place at the right time. We created something that was considered original within a somewhat narrow black metal context. Like a sub-genre of black metal. But I also think that many people misunderstood us. I remember a few embarrasing attempts of other bands trying to copy what we were doing. It's great though."

What does your debut album "Bergtatt" sound like to you now?

"I haven't listened to it for a few years, but I'm still proud of it. Considering my age, my surroundings and the things I was interested in at the time... It's past culture nonetheless.

How about your second album "Kveldssanger"? It was rather simplistic.

"There are some good ideas on that album, but of course it could have been realised better. We have been thinking about taking some of the original music from that album and also from "Nattens Madrigal" and rearrange it, but we'll have to see about that... "Kveldssanger" is probably the most important album we did at the time, in terms of introducing new ideas to the scene."

Then you regressed and made "Nattens Madrigal". That album is the absolute favourite of many people and also one of the real milestones in the history of black metal.

"When we wrote that album we were very interested in the old-school black metal aesthetic, the very specific sound of it, and "Bergtatt" didn't seem brutal enough anymore. It is always hard to explain the reasons for shifting shape in Ulver, the reasons are often complex. "Nattens Madrigal" was written before "Kveldssanger", but Century Media didn't publish it until early '97. Knowing that might make more sense to some. And by the way, we didn't record the album in the forest as rumours say. The riffs became original because we listened to a lot of different music at the time, and we sort of placed non-metal harmonies and chords into a grim and necro black metal context. I guess we managed to do pull off something really fierce with that album."

The lyrical side of the album is very interesting, it talks of the beast in man?

"Yes, there are eight fractions of a story that describes some sort of bestial metamorphosis in man. We were inspired by the legends of werewolves, the viking berzerkers who ate magic mushrooms and took on animal shapes before they went into battle. Books by Sabine Baring Gould, La Fontaine. Fairytales like Little Red Riding Hood and so forth. It was all very symbolic to us."

Were the lyrics meant for critics or praise?

"It was pure cultivation of the animalistic. We felt very strongly about it. We meant to advocate the primordial instincts and speak of pagan magical traditions at the same time."

After the album you took quite a step inside your musical selves, and you re-emerged with an album based on the book "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" by William Blake. Did you have any expectations of the reactions from fans?

"Not really. If we are personally into something, that's reason enough for us. Of course we kind of know that some will dig it while others will get all upset."

Has the book affected you personally?

"Of course. William Blake is my fuckin' hero..."

Why did you include that long empty spot on the 2nd disc? The work could've been released on one CD because of the duration...

"It was a couple of minutes too long for a single CD. 80 minutes or something. Besides, all that music in a single dose is information overload hazard. Now when the work is divided, you can go eat something in between or something..."

"Dance music for black souls"

Then there's the material on "Metamorphosis" and "Perdition City"... How would you react if some dance club played your music?

"That would be just fine. Although I imagine some gothic establishment would be more plausible. Perhaps the songs are a bit too lengthy, but parts of them could work. On "Disguised Masters "by Arcturus there are a few dancier tracks, so maybe that one would work better!

Perhaps those people would get upset if they knew that the same persons were responsible for making controversial black metal before...

"Maybe, but I have nothing against people who don't listen to metal. Too many people have been fucking with us concerning these things, but we believe in artistic freedom. If someone should decide that we are traitors to the cause and play wimp music or something, then that's their problem."

It seems that you really hate these current black metal fellows?

"I don't hate them but they tend to dissapoint me..."

What's your opinion of Wild Rags re-releasing your "Vargnatt" demo-cassette, featuring a picture of Shagrath urinating on himself?

"That's really uncool. Shagrath was a short-time member of Ulver back in '94, and is still a good friend of mine although we might have radically different ideas of things. So putting those kind of comments in our mouths is really low. I may not agree with the music and mission of Dimmu Borgir, but the guys are old friends of mine. It's kind of a compliment whenever someone makes bootlegs of you, but not in this manner, thank you."

Have you been promoting your new albums inside those circles where people listen to more of that kind of music?

"Which kind of music? The dreaded techno shit? Yeah, in Denmark we are in the electronic music charts, and in Norway we currently hold the top position of a station that mostly plays techno music."

What kind of sales figures have you reached with your previous albums?

"The "...William Blake..." album is closing in on 30 000. It's a lot considering that I released it on my own label with limited resources."

Are there any other bands on your label?

"A few, and they kick ass. All of them are out of their minds."

Do you think you can make a living of the band in the future?

"I kind of do that already. I also work in a recording studio, Endless Sound, in which I am a partner. Then there's my label, Jester Records, and Ulver."

The studio you work in is rather famous. What kind of music has been recorded there?

"Mostly rock music, but also a lot of pop, punk, hip-hop and other styles. Bands like Turbonegro, Kåre & the Cavemen, Gluecifer, Big Bang, Sister Rain. Quite well known stuff in Norway. A few metal albums as well. Being in this kind of environment affects me positively and it reflects in my music. I know more about music and how to create it now. I am better at distinguishing professional music from non-professional."

Or at least you think so.

"Yeah."

Back to Ulver again, who's in the band nowadays?

"Tore Ylwizaker, who came in as a new member for the "...William Blake..." album and I are the only members at this point. All the other members have left or was kicked out because they couldn't adapt to our current vision. Besides, we make more concentrated, intense and hypnotic stuff between the two of us. Tore and I are almost on telepathic terms when it comes to music, so there are very few compromises. I also know quite many talented musicians, so I can ask them to help us out whenever I need to. In the future we might make an album with more guitars on it, and then we would probably call Haavard, who was the lead guitarist on our first four albums. The guitar is not my instrument of choice at the moment."

What did the other members think of being kicked out?

"There are no real hard feelings. I'm still on terms with them. The point is that we can use the computer or a synth to create better bass lines, rhythm sections et cetera,

so they became superfluous. The machines kind of took their places."

"Ulver vs. fans"

On "Metamorphosis" there are a few nasty comments towards the fans. Has you line of privacy been crossed?

"Hell yes. It is a straight response to the loud-mouthed motherfuckers."

I think that the constant changes in Ulver and the opinions of the members might have upset many, perhaps reasonably. Don't you ever give positive feedback to the positive fans?

"No, I'm an ungrateful bastard you see. Approach me with caution (laughs)."

Now back to the song-writing process of Ulver. How long does this improvisation take, all in all?

"It's impossible to say, as it varies from project to project. We're actually about to release an EP that is written, recorded and mixed in a single day. "Perdition City" took us a year or so, because we wanted to really develop the songs. "Nattens Madrigal" for instance took about six months rehearsing and recording."

You caught a lot of attention in '93 when there were rival murders and churches blazing in Norway and you also appeared in the TV documentary Det Svarte Alvor dealing with the Satanic movement. Have your opinions changed from these times?

"We were no doubt part of the black metal movement of the early 90's, and we were also affiliated with the so-called Inner Circle which has later become a myth. I don't think my opinions have changed as much as some might think. I have of course re-defined many of my views and taken those ideas onto a more mature level. I still consider myself a Satanist although it's not important for me to boast about it. It's a quite simple philosophy, a way of life, and it either suits you or it doesn't. I am not so openly into those things anymore, but the Satanic aesthetic is still in my heart. It would be strange if it wasn't, considering my past. Michael Moynihan who is quite involved in the American Church of Satan contacted us a while ago and interviewed Ulver for their in-house publication, The Black Flame. We are probably one of the few bands those people have taken seriously, and I take that as a compliment."

Do you rely on propaganda or a "fist in the face" technique concerning these matters?

"Without the church-burnings and all those malevolent physical acts black metal certainly wouldn't be as recognised as it is these days. The shock effect of those actions got lots of people interested in what black metal and Satanism was all about. But at some point you have to take those ideas beyond mere controversy. Black metal is a very undeveloped form of social antagonism, blaming everyone else for all that is bad, or seems wrong about society. Young people are often very insecure about such matters, perhaps angry, and they need some strong cause to feel important, alive or different, I don't know... Of course black metal is a killer option to these kids. Just tear it all down, you know. I personally defuse all my frustration inwards and let others do what the fuck they want. The people who usually get in my way are ironically for the most part black metal people and not Christians. I'm altogether antichristian, but I won't waste any time or energy because of it."

Then what is your aim in life?

"To better myself, and to create something that is truly my own. To leave something of value behind, some legacy. Some voice in the maelstrom. I'm very old-fashioned like that. In my opinion wild rebellion against christianity and all that is cheap. It is much more challenging to try and create something to fill the psychic void left by all those old traditions and institutions."

At one point your mission in life was obviously to destroy Century Media?

"(laughs) I wouldn't put it that way, but they were a pain in the ass from the very beginning. We didn't communicate well. They only made 6 album deals with artists, so negotiating a deal for only 3 albums took us almost a year. The contract ended abruptly with the "...Blake" album, but I had to puts lots of money on the table to rid us of the contract. When I later released that album myself, it got top scores in almost every major metal magazine in Europe and that must surely have pissed Century Media off. I reached instant sales of over 20 000 copies on my newborn little label. If they had released it, it would surely have sold twice as much, considering the press. I bet they are not my biggest fans (laughs)!"

In the beginning of your career you also worked on an album by Borknagar.

"Two albums actually. But I was never an important member, I was just a voice for hire."

You also sang on the new album by Zyklon.

"Yeah, it was no big deal. I just did that to be cool with Samoth."

Still a few words about Arcturus... What's the situation in the band nowadays?

"At the moment there's Hellhammer, Sverd, Knut and I in the band. Right now it's a ship without Captain. I think it's going to sink eventually. The grotesque circus direction the band took for "La Masquerade Infernale" was Knut's and my idea, and the following remix album "Disguised Masters" was more or less my handywork. I'm still waiting for someone to take command of the ship. The upcoming album is supposed to become a more developed version of "La Masquerade...". But it's far from finished, so we'll have to see."





Thank you for the interview. I hope this unravels the current concept of the band a bit and makes the listener familiar with your mysterious world. In the end I just have to ask what are you intending to do in the future?

"I'm going to go down."

Part II – by Roy Kristensen

I met Garm in Ulver's studio one misty afternoon in Olso, Norway January 2004.

"Jester "

The last few years Garm has worked more and more with his label, Jester Records. The label was born when Ulver released "Themes from William Blake's The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" back in 1998, and it has slowly but consistently grown. On the list Jester has such bands as When, Virus, Star of Ash, Bogus Blimp, Rotoscope, Single Unit and obviously Ulver. We're not talking metal here, we're talking about a very peculiar kind of music, integrity, identity and the lack of time.

"That's my problem" **Garm begins when I ask him about time. I thought he had maybe found some recipe to stretch the 24-hour cycle, but no.**

"I am insanely busy with my own music these days. I don't have time to run Jester Records as I should. My conscience is suffering because I feel I haven't done all that I could for the various releases. The good news is that former Ulver-drummer, Erik Lancelot, is onboard now. He will be helping me develop the logistics of Jester Records as well as promoting the more marginal releases we have. I have been doing all the administrative work myself you know. I've also been solely responsible for kissing distributor ass, write one-sheets, send out promos etc. So yeah, welcome help (laughs)."

Think about it. Jester Records, Ulver, Arcturus. In addition he has a family, he has friends and in between he has to eat and drink. Garm looks forward to the aid he's about to recieve from the aforementioned Lancelot.

"It'll be good for the label, not only for me personally. I will of course still be the boss, but my role will be more on the creative side, directing the madness (laughs).

We made some money off Ulver's "Themes…", the first release via Jester. We used that money to invest in other projects. It's what got the ball rolling. The little money we make on our releases all go back into building the label. Jester Records is truly about the love of music, building a catalogue to be proud of."

Just the day before we met I got the latest Terrorizer, and to my surprise the new When album "Pearl-Harvest" got 7 out of 10. Garm still has a solid reputation in our world of metal, despite the lack of just that in Jester's releases. Personally I haven't heard more than a handful of these releases, but I'm always impressed by the strong identity and the quality of these albums. Which isn't that strange, as Garm seems to be very conscious about the quality aspect of his releases.

"Yeah, I am very conscious about what's good and what's not. Obviously, it has to do with personal taste, but I do sincerely think that I am a good quality judge. I've well schooled in the technical aspects of music. It's very rewarding when I come across bands/musicians who I feel really know their trade and are conscious about their sound. Even if it's the most fucked up or strange sounding record I've ever heard I feel that it has to be that by choice and not coincidence. Sound as a concept is extremely important to me, and it satisfies me to affiliate with artists who take sound to the limits."

Sound, yes. Ulver was a well-known black metal band back in the days, moving over to the experiment "…William Blake" after all was into today's experimentation and development of sounds, rhythms and the music itself. Garm doesn't look at it from this point of view, as he says:

"I don't think black metal is extreme per se. I mean, just look at the amount of people into that stuff today. It is totally conform and safe to be into Black metal now. People like Dave Grohl from Nirvana is doing it for God's sake. What we do in Jester is way more extreme, because we are on the borders of everything else out there. We are the ones who are really challenging the musical norms. It's ironic how black metal fans still see themselves as some exclusive little gang of bandits or something (laughs)."

Speaking about yourself, Garm, I think that your expression was pretty extreme back in those days, when way less people liked and listened well to black metal.

"I don't see my development as being any less extreme. But extremety come in different shapes as well. We are not so much angry as we are confused, or generally mind boggled. There is no hope for us. The dark is in the backbone now."

Ulver paints in different landscapes. Ulver moves in various levels. "Perdition City" can be listened to as some kind of background music, but it can also be deeply engaging. Making you think and feel.

"Much like reading some anthology" **Garm begins.** "You can read an article or two, skip the rest and be satisfied, but you're not full before you've sat through the whole goddamn book."

"Arcturus"

I sense that Garm will not do the vocals for the next Arcturus album. He agrees to that, as far as he knows. We laugh a little before I tell him I read somewhere that the touring-plans were the main factor for him leaving the band.

"It was the decisive factor" **Garm begins.** "But there were other things as well. When we started working on "The Sham Mirrors" we were in a quite productive phase, but it was a shortlived one. Two years went by before the album was ready for release. I pushed it hard in the end, as no one seemed to give a shit. So I took on the responsible producer's role, thinking I just had to get the motherfucker off my chest to focus on other commitments. Of course the inevitable happened, I'd done the job too well (laughs). The rest of the band actually liked the result (laughs again). Soo much that they wanted to start working on a new piece of music right away. Steinar Sverd Johansen (keyboards) certainly got into a born-again Arcturian mode, but I didn't really feel it at that point. The album turned out to be a killer one, but I was basically fed up. So, when they proposed rehearsing three days a week and all that I realised I couldn't tag along anymore. After all, my schedule was more than full with Ulver, scoring for several films, Jester Records and my newborn son. I should also mention that I think Arcturus is a band that benefits greatly from some water running under the bridge. That it took the band five years between "La Masquerade Infernale" and "The Sham Mirrors" was a good thing. I don't think the album would be as clever had it been made three years earlier. The synthesis of all

our doings and developments on the side is what makes the album what it is. Inspiration sometimes need time."

I guess five years are a minimum of what you need to actually swallow and digest "La Masquerade Infernale". We laugh and Garm continues:

"There really was no other band like us at the time. It was a powerful experiment. But musically and production wise it was full of flaws. "The Sham Mirrors" was more like a confirmation, or fullfilment of the vision we had for that album. "La Masquerade…" was rebellious, whereas "Sham..." just excels. It didn't only show that we were capable of crafting spaced-out shit, but we did it with an arrogant grin, if you know what I mean. There's a weird sense of humour in that album that was absent on "La Masquerade…"."

What impressed me the most concerning "The Sham Mirrors" is the vocal performance from the man himself. I had to ask him if he sings a lot in the shower. Garm laughs and says:

"Yeah, I'm a great bathroom singer. Seriously, I spend quite a lot of time in the studio, probably 150 days a year or something. As I become more experienced I listen to my own performances from a 3rd persons perspective kind of thing. I am more thorough in all ways, so I think my vocal-performances improve from album to album basically because I am better at really listening to it. I have the voice I have, you know.

For the new album from Ulver, Blood Inside, which we're constructing these days, we have deleted vocal-takes ad infinitum. Many of those takes would probably have passed the test a couple of years ago."

"A poet's tragedy"

"I guess we'll end up not releasing anything due to self-criticism or self-loathing. It is like the poet's tragedy; that he ends up with nothing but a blank sheet. He writes it all white, if you know what I mean. People have a tendency to kill themselves in the art world. I guess I am being rather pessimistic here, but that's how I ultimately see it. However, when I look upon the current state of the music industry I tend to think "oh well", it's not all that bad. In that sense I actually find some comfort in the fact that the world is so full of shit. The process still interests me. We fail, but at least we fail better."

But when you feel this hopelessness and since you are this pessimistic I have to raise a question concerning your motivation. In our beautiful country we all have the possibility to live a life of luxury and materialistic abundance that others would only dream of. We have the equipment to make life easier, we have wellfare… So I wonder, where do all your darkened thoughts origin? Garm sees my point and takes the whole of Western civilization into consideration. His response is blunt:

"We are obviously beyond the mere struggle for survival, but we are animals nonetheless. With no real cause in life we torture ourselves mentally."

So, what's in it for you?

"I am, as most others, a complex individual. Happy and carefree at times; a paranoid and miserable havoc at others. However, when it comes to the artistic side of me I tend to focus on the shadowy side of things. I don't really know why it is like this, probably vanity or something. But hey, the dark is there, so why not explore it, find out what's hiding inside, what's being kept from you. It's all around us, and also within us. I'm aware of that, the big black motherfucking void, you know.

I also think it's a cleansing-process. Some use dreams to wash the dirt off, whereas I need several remedies to exorcise"

"Svidd Neger"

I like the music you made for this movie. It's quite dark, and to a certain degree it fits the movie. Though, "Svidd Neger" is what I would call a black comedy. How on earth did Ulver end up doing the soundtrack?

"Actually, both the director and the screenwriter contacted us, each on their own. The director was a fan from before, and the latter had been listening to the "…William Blake..." album while writing the script (go figure – ED)."

The movie contained different songs from other artists, but Ulver was in charge of the actual score. I personally don't like the other musical contributions to this movie, as they have little to do with Ulver. The movie itself, "Svidd Neger", is a strange one, including bizarre happenings, a wicked cast, blood, tits, great Norwegian nature, insane humour and a bloody ending. Out of curiosity, what did Garm think of the movie?

"Well, I don't think it's a film that necessarily fits Ulver…". **Garm hesitates, takes a deep drag from his cigarette before he continues.** "It's a crazy movie, but I think it had more potential. I can understand that the average Joe found it rather funny, but to us it was more of an opportunity to try something else. We've learnt a lot from it, and it has opened quite a few doors for us. We're actually going to work on two new movies when we return from Los Angeles, where we are mixing our new album. "Svidd Neger" was a nice opportunity for us to get into film scoring as well as make some money to support other projects and pay off the grim taxman."

The process of making a soundtrack is probably different compared to doing Ulver, right? Actually, they didn't do it the easiest way, but then again they didn't have the experience at the time.

"We made the music during the editing of the movie. This was a big fucking mistake, since they kept re-editing the movie, meaning we had to re-edit music we thought was ready to go. From now on we will not work like that. We won't do any fine-edits or synch-work until after the editing is finished."

How would you compare this to making the real Ulver music? I mean, with "Svidd Neger" you have a picture or 2.000 to relate to, while making the Ulver-music you have your minds and inspirations… Garm pauses before he answers.

"Well… It's certainly a different enterprise. It's less free and it demands a lot of very technical work. As far as the music goes, we insisted on creating atmospheres that was close to the heart of Ulver, otherwise there would really be no point. But of course we had to make compromises. There were several cooks who listened to the music as it developed, had lots of opinions about it, and needed to sanction it all... Nevertheless it was we who made the soundtrack. It was always connected to our preferences."

"Studio"

So, for an ignorant like myself I asked Garm to tell us a bit about the process they go through when they work with their music.

"We have our own internal way of working. The starting-point is most often a simple one. We find a melody or a synth-sound, then we start operating the sound or melody and put layers upon layers of sound before we start plucking it all apart again. It's hard to describe really. There are sometimes rules that apply and other times complete anarchy."

Before you begin work, do you have a picture of where you're heading?

"Usually, yes. But they dig their their own grave rather quickly. It's all transcending to intuition."

Being in the studio now compared to, let's say 10 years ago, has to be a quite different thing, right? Garm confirms that.

"Yeah, things were different back then. We rehearsed 3 or 4 times a week and then hired some cheap-ass studio for a couple of weeks to cut the album. The new album has taken us a year of studio work. We're here almost every day, like a normal job really (laughs)."

"The fans"

We haven't talked about the metal scene, and to Garm's relief we're not going to either. I mean, Ulver doesn't have much to do with the metal scene anymore, musically or mentally. But, just as in the metal scene and every other musical scene, Ulver has fans. What do you think attracts a fan of Ulver, and who's your fan?

"I think that's individual. I don't think there's a formula that identifies an Ulver-fan, but I have a feeling that Ulver appeals to the student type. You know, someone who used to wear black clothes exclusively and listen to metal and goth music but then somehow widened their horizons and started wearing clothes with colour again (laughs). Someone like me."

The "…William Blake..." album got almost top score in Terrorizer a while ago, and as far as I remember there was an interview as well. Garm has done vocals for Arcturus until now, and I assume that's worth something as well, so… I don't know, it could be that because Ulver still has the dark feelings and atmospheres it still appeals to many a metal fan.

"Yeah, for sure. We don't sound like most. I'm sure my history has a lot to do with this, since I have another history than the common electronica-musician who was probably into rave-music in the early 90's."

"Inspiration"

Thank you for the music, in this case "Bergtatt" which I still enjoy to a high extent. One thing that makes me curious is the further development of Ulver. I wonder, what is your inner demon, Garm? What makes you able to create even more music? Or as the more average man would ask; what's your inspiration?

"That's hard to say. On one hand we have music, on the other hand there are words, colours et al. I think the impetus for Tore and my future work is to overcome musical problems. If we don't know how to pull of something, then we'll just have to find a way, you know. Also, words are back in the game. We intend to work more with text.

I mean, there are numerous ways to attack… well, everything. The truth is so goddamn relative and we're painfully aware that. That whatever we do is just another alternative. We are inspired by other artists who work within similar problem areas. Working dedicatedly with contradictions and paradoxes and negations of all that seems right on the surface. We wish to take away the apparent meaning of things, to use words against themselves, to transgress and translate. A different kind of darkness.

Our demon is the blank sheet. To us the blank sheet represents some sort of perfection, but how approach it through writing.... The good old silence in sound... In the end it's all alchemy I guess."

After we finished our conversation I got to hear three tracks from the upcoming Ulver album. Once again Ulver is ready to challenge our minds and I promise you, Christmas will never be the same again.

PRESS REVIEWS

Well, dear fellows, since the underground media follows a free falling it is only natural for the number of magazines/fanzines to constantly and critically decrease. I am exceedingly glad I found, for this issue as well, some (few, it is true...) serious reasons to justify and build the idea that Metal underground still exist...

ANCIENT CEREMONIES (POR)-issue 11, September-December, 2003 (60 A4 pages, English, professionally printed, partially coloured)

Nuno Santos seems to take his job seriously and thus a brand new issue is released every four months! As usually, there is a way too much advertising, but you can find here some interesting but succinct interviews with bands such as: GOD DETHRONED, BARATHRUM, ONDSKAPT, INFERNAL, SPAWN OF POSSESSION, NOVEMBERS DOOM, ETERNAL GRAY, ARKHON INFAUSTUS, ABORTED, THE KOVENANT, AMON AMARTH, KONKHRA, SEAR BLISS, SEPTIC FLESH, PSYPHERIA or PERISHED. Do not get worried, there are plenty reviews as well (over 200) well written and as a fact, I appreciate that even if there are many editors, each of them is focused on a certain style so that the reader wouldn't get confused or bothered. As far as my magazine is regarded, Nuno doesn't exactly keep it close to his heart but the way he expresses such is indeed so diplomatic! I do respect his point of view even if we actually have different points of view referring to the manner of promoting Metal. Well, the imagery is professionally and elegantly conceived but I cannot help myself in noticing it actually has no identity only following the line of all "big" popular and commercial magazines. You can benefit of a free CD as well, which is something nice and therefore it might justify every penny you pay! If up to me, this kind of magazine might get important solely as far as information is regarded but otherwise it really doesn't touch me the way "Imhotep" does, for example! Well, it is pretty obvious, anyone can settle a set of questions, with no further research or else and then publish so that he would be trendy... fashionable! Good for him as long as money and interest don't miss the picture! www.ancientceremonies.com Nuno Santos, Apartado 60334, 2701-904 Amadora, Portugal. Rating: 0.90/1 (17.01)

AGHARTA(ROM)-issue 1, 2003(28 A5 pages, English, printed, coloured covers)

This is just another try to score into the autochthonous written media. Started with a lot of optimism, this magazine from Galati (a Romanian town situated in Moldavian region) is confronted with several troubles and thus financial problems added to poor sells determined the two editors to delay the release of second issue. If I refer to this issue's "substance" I must say it is only clear: it is a debut one, with many mistakes, in lack of originality but with a lot of subjectivism in reviews. I discover here simple common interviews, in lack of details, but pretty much the same with the majority of such magazines, featuring bands like: GOD, BUCOVINA, MAY RESULT, INTERITUS DEI, VOKODLOK or VEPRES, some mediocre press-reviews and nothing more. What can I say, laudable intentions but a modest result! In this very case we have to choose between not having a thing, on one hand, and appreciating the effort, on the other hand. The results... may wait! Anyway, I suppose it is no capital mistake/loss if spending 1$ for a fanzine made up solely out of devotion! As for the ones who play in HATHOR band, meaning the two editors of this magazine, I think it wouldn't be bad if improving their writing style otherwise the effort would be fruitless! agharta_zine@immortal.com Rating: 0.68/1 (17.01)

AXA VALAHA(ROM)-issue 3, 2003 (74 A4 pages, English, Xerox)

I remember Nosferatu warning me this issue would be full of information! Well, I must admit, it is like that! Even the imagery has encountered some changes! I really appreciate the fact that it contains many reviews to dozens of magazines and demos...exactly what an Underground magazine should be like! The writers make references to extreme styles, while Death, Gore and Grind Core build the very nucleus right beside Black Metal. In such light, it is only natural for it to enclose interviews with: FEASTING BLOOD, RITUAL, FAR FROM MIND, UNHOLY ARCHANGEL, NUNSLAUGHTER, CRUACHAN, NAER MATARON, HORIBLE EYS, TROLLECH, BUCOVINA, MERENDINE ATOMICHE, SHADEWORKSKRATORNAS, VLAD DRACUL... Some of them are really good; some are made in hurry and in lack of interesting details. In my opinion, the reviews-chapter is rather too short and snappy and pretty superficial so that, in the end, the reader doesn't actually get the help he needed in order to decide if looking for or if buying or not an album or another. Well, on the other side, I must say that some of the press-reviews are indeed pertinent and really justified. It is a long way to reach a professional approach! If we take a look by comparing this release to the previous ones, well, this one is by far the best and the most condensed! I actually enjoyed browsing this magazine especially its texture. But nothing more! I understand there is as well a free CD but I don't know for sure. All in all: Maximum effort, maximum devotion to underground... the only thing missing is what I already mentioned upper. Well, good luck for the next issue! Nosferatu@k.ro www.valahmetal.ro Rating: 0.80/1 (24.01)

BARBARIC POETRY(SWE)-Issue 3, October 2003 (36 pages A4, Xerox, English)

It seems like this is Janne's last wheeze in such conditions... at least this is what he sustains throughout his brief editorial. The new edition comes exactly in the same mediocre layout pointing out no major financial investment at this chapter. 99% of all developed subjects gravitate on extreme musical styles: Death, Thrash Metal or Grind Core. We have here almost 200 reviews of which more than half represent demos plus 30 ones for underground fanzines. Don't expect reading about other styles than previously mentioned! We have here some interesting interviews such as: BLOOD DUSTER, MACHETAZO, THRONEUM, PRIMAL DAWN, THE CHASM, DEFINITION SANE or HEADHUNTER D.C. Both the writing style and approach are mature and I really appreciate such and so are some of the reviews for concerts. A fanzine dedicated 100% to extreme underground! Janne Huhta, Aprilgatan 72, 415 15 Gothenburg, Sweden, prophecy_jh@hotmail.com. Rating: 0.81/1 (22.01)

BLEEDINIG CANVAS(THA)-Issue 3, 2003 (60 pages A5, Xerox, English)

This is just another fanzine promoting extreme underground and even the editor defines his effort as: "Horror Fucking Death Metal'Zine". In a precarious shape, with simplistic interviews and superficial reviews, in lack of imagination... this very material could wake some interest solely for the collectors of printed fanzines. I haven't found anything special or professional... but a certain interest, devotement and some appreciable intentions. You could read interviews with BEHEADED, BLOODY GORE, BUTCHERY, CADAVEROUS, CREMATION, EDGECRUSHER, ENTHRALIMENT, HYPONIC, INHUMATE, KRVESTREB, MORTEM, PYOPOESY... But nothing in addition! Yongyuth H, P.O. BOX 83, Huamark, Bangkok, 10243, Thailand, bleedingincanvas@hotmail.com. Rating: 0.72/1 (25.01)

GOLDEN LAKE PRODUCTIONS(UK)-#2 2003 (52 pages A4, professionally printed on glossy paper, colour cover, English)

Fraser Mc Gartland comes back in forth with a new issue and I must confess, it is a decent elegant and taken care material. It resembles much with the debut except the fact that there are now different guests while the reviews became more professional and detailed even if somehow rather of too much praising. Amongst interviews we can read about bands like: KHOLD, MANGLED, CENTINEX, FOREFATHER, SHADEWORKS, ZA FRUMI, RAIN FELL WITHIN, IMMEMORIAK, DEADPAD, APHASIA, MESS AGE or ENCHANTED, besides two bands from his own label, UNSILENCE and FORSAKEN. It is a nice layout, no doubt, and it was printed again in Bulgaria at Chavdar/Brutallica. I also did enjoy the historic documentary regarding Bannockburn's battle, an unusual but well received fact! Contact: GLP, 19 Castlehill Drive, Newton Mearns, Glasgow, G77 5JZ, Scotland, http://musicfans.to/goldenlake. Rating: 0.83/1 (25.01)

HMM(ROM)-issue 27, 2003 (68 A4 pages, Romanian, printed, partially coloured)

The oldest alive Metal publication in Romania included this time a compilation CD, like all respectable magazines usually do! I actually found out from its boss, Danut Ivanescu, something interesting: the magazine is supposed to be released three times per year so that the fact it activates on the market would be a certainty! It is a pity for this monthly magazine (ONCE!) to actually become one on three months (and there were times when its activity was drastically jeopardized if not almost terminated!). The best part is that the magazine didn't die and this year it actually celebrates a decade of existence... a decade of regularly "feeding" Romanian public with diverse (more or less) Metal information. I lately noticed a shy focus on extreme Metal styles and even on Underground as well, something which happened not before... not that obviously... Well, this fact actually pleased me much! Yet do not imagine we talk about a fanzine, but about a commercial Metal magazine with a decent layout, simple paper including information of all kind and interviews with bands like: IRON MAIDEN, KING DIAMOND or UDO and even STIILE VOLK, MYSTERIUM or MARSYAS. It is an autochthonous replica to famous ROCK HARD magazine except the fact we couldn't talk about a similar value or evaluation! Some interviews are well done and professionally conceived, pretty detailed, while others are performed in haste. The same goes for reviews as well (some of them tend to be rather too philosophic and too complex featuring some ridiculous comparisons!) but they are few in number: only 30 or so. It is nice it still exists! Perhaps it would be nice if fonts' size was smaller! But it is nice that you can find it on the news papers' table... and only at a fine price of 2, 5 euros with a CD included. Even if amongst my readers I would-

n't count that many as HMM do, I thought it wouldn't be that bad to mention about it here... especially since Romania isn't exactly the country with the biggest number of serious Metal magazines! HMM, P.O. Box 41-71, Bucuresti, lenti@hades,ro Rating: 0.85/1

IMHOTEP(NOR)-issue 9, "Incorporated" 2003 (56 A4 pages, English, professionally printed on glossy paper, partially coloured)

Everybody must know already that this very magazine is the closest to my heart than any other, especially since Roy and I started almost in the same time. Facing various synoptic times and lots of more or less accomplished promises... many years have passed and here I am writing about issue #9. Featuring an exceptional graphics (the same Lars Jamne), the last outcome of the Norwegian seems to be the most professional, from all points of view: professional reviews, elegant long profound and very interesting interviews with bands such as: ABORYM, BEHEMOTH, CRADLE OF FILTH, DIMMU BORGIR, KAMELOT, MADDER MORTEM, SECRETS OF THE MOON, SHINING and SOLEFALD. It is sad to notice there are fewer reviews than in times before (around 125) and there is no shade of press reviews or demo reviews while the photos are extremely large like if he intended to cover as much as possible the extra space left. As far as the graphics and imagery are concerned I think it is OK, which is not the same for information which got "thinner and thinner", not exactly what we got used with during the years. For the most "reliable" buyers or readers it has been "invented" a weird "reward" so that if they want to read some interviews entirely or some more reviews they have to access his website and write a password (which can be found through the magazine's pages...) and there is: complete information! Issue #10 was featured solely on internet while for issue #11 (printed) it seems there are some firm data for the end of this year. I know Roy has built a nucleus of 15 collaborators (amongst whom I actually partially may number myself!) in order to be sure that the magazine shall go on no matter what. All in all, it is an underground magazine which shouldn't miss any collection of real fans of extreme Metal. R.K., Hauketovn. 5B, 1266 Oslo, Norway, imhotep@chello.no, www.imhotepzine.com Rating: 0.91/1 (01.02)

LEGACY(GER)-issue 24, April/May, 2003 (164 A4 pages, German, professionally printed on glossy paper, partially coloured)

It would be a really stupid thing to criticize such magazine. Let's say for example it owns a three times larger amount of information than this very issue of Kogaionon and, beyond such, it is indeed a powerful magazine printed in thousands and thousands copies, with a certain commercial tendency definitely away from what Underground means! I've been writing about it because I actually found in it a review for mine and especially because the one who sent it to me must have considered a reasonable thing to exchange our works. I don't want to insist in many details, but I tell you this: if you know German language, you definitely shouldn't miss this publication! Everything is professionally conducted, first class, I'd say... and there are news and information in abundance... well, this goes as well for advertising, but I am sure it's all worth it, you can find as well catalogues plus a free CD. The magazine is published on a regular basis, once in two months and it contains approximately 20 interviews, hundreds of reviews, concert-reviews... In order to get an idea if it interests you or not I'll write down what interviews I found here: TYPE O NEGATIVE, SEPULTURA, KATATONIA, SOILWORK, ENSLAVED, HIM, BATHORY, DARK THRONE, DIMMU BORGIR, BLIND GUARDIAN... Indeed, the voice from the Dark Side!!! Richard Wagner Str.64, 66111 Saarbrucken, Germany, redaktion@legacy666.de Rating: 0.90/1 (01.02)

MAXIMUM ROCK(ROM)-issue #3, September/October, 2003 (24 A4 pages, Romanian, professionally printed on glossy paper, colour cover)

Just like a replica to HMM, Nelu Brandusan/Promusic Records has decided last year to publish his own magazine and it seems his business is a good optimistic one. In lack of much editorial experience but with a very enthusiastic team, Maximum Rock features a few "thin" interviews with bands like: ILLNATH, TROOPER, AVATAR, SILENT EDGE, PROFOUND and a very successful one with cu KING DIAMOND. As for the reviews... I must say they are indeed without any real steady structure, a way too positive and in lack of specific technical details not being able to clear up the reader's mind! Well, I noticed improvements with each new issue but there is much more to work until it may be considered a professional magazine for its type. I'd say it is about imagery OK, the paper quality is superior to HMM but it has fewer pages and, just like HMM, it insists on large photos "filling" the space! This very magazine has a free CD and its price is indeed modicum: 2 EUR. I have no idea what should be its frequency but I imagine once in two months since issues #4 is already out. P.O. Box 1-421, Cluj-Napoca 3400, Romania, maximumrock@promusicprod.ro, www.promusicprod.ro Rating : 0.82/1 (01.02)

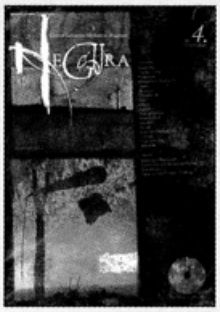
METAL RULES!(USA)-issue 15, 2003 (848 A4 pages, English, professionally printed, colour cover)

Jeff presents a magazine featuring almost all Metal versions and I believe such amalgam can only confuse the readers. How do you picture, right in the same magazine (Underground desired!), interviews with ROTTEN SOUND and SAXON? Less underground and much more Heavy Metal... and maybe even commercial since we can find here discussions with WASP, JETHRO TULL, DOKKEN or PAUL DI'ANNO. There are few dozens of reviews, succinctly made and somehow superficial and the same goes for the entire magazine! I had experienced a pleasing feeling to notice acid black humour between the lines, sometimes a good one, and other times pretty childish. Graphics is monotonous and I must warn you: each photo is followed by all kind of comments, more or less decent. Well, I suppose you can make an idea of how serious and profound this magazine is just from the fact it actually has a column of "answering readers' letters"! I assume this magazine is of a real success in States but not for me! As far as I am concerned this kind of effort doesn't wake in me any admiration at all! Sorry Jeff but we have completely different points of view about what Underground is or may be! 2116 Sandra Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043 USA, www.metalrulesmagazine.com Rating: 0.71/1 (02.02)

METALWORKS(IRE)-issue 3, 2002 (88 A4 pages, English, professionally printed on glossy paper, partially coloured)

Well, dear friends, this magazine is worth each and single penny you pay for it! Not that it is an exceptional publication or a journalistic bomb... but because of a serious overall note. Everything is presented here in such a serious discreet and elegant manner. Interviews are not that detailed but neither superficial... let's say they are above the media! There are as well over 200 well written reviews, a good live report Wacken Open Air. Both graphics and general quality are exquisite and it was a real pleasure for me to browse this magazine! Check it out! Here are some of the interviews featured: ARCH ENEMY, THYRFING, CHALICE, ACADEMY STUDIOS, VADER, IN FLAMES, ANTIMATTER, SLAYER, DESTROYER 666, and NOCTURNAL RITES. This magazine is dedicated to all Metal fans, not necessarily solely to Underground's fans but it seems to be well received since a new issue is about to be ready. P.O. Box 80, Leixlip, Co.Kildare, Ireland, metalworksmagazine@hotmail.com, www.metalworksmagazine.com Rating: 0.88/1 (01.02)

NEGURA(ROM)-issue 4, February 2004 (84 A4 pages, English, professionally printed on glossy paper, colour cover)



My friend Gabi is more determined than ever and thus we can hold a new chapter of his publication founded five years ago. I must admit, this is the most successful issue so far as far as imagery is concerned with a nice cover and elegant pagination. Well I find it natural since the one who made such was Dan F. Spataru. There are included as well some fashionable elements imitating German regular magazines (such as Ablaze!) but the result is really good. You can read a very good and long interview with ORDO DRACONIS, which has indeed plenty spicy details thanks to Rahab's interesting answers. I'd say that generally speaking the discussions' level is medium, with formal questions and similar answers, not necessarily interesting but simply a "plus" of information: PRIMORDIAL, THE KOVENANT, TORMENTOR, MORPHEUS, OBTEST, ENID, VOKODLOK. Well, you can find here interviews of half page but this counts less since you can enjoy 18 interviews in total, three articles of mythology and more than 300 reviews made by three distinct persons who actually form NEGURA's core. I am not exactly a fan of this kind of review as it is rather like telling a story not like an evaluation/analysis. The reviews are long-long with inappropriate comparisons amongst bands and in the end they are somehow boring. A great disadvantage is that interviews are indeed old -made in 2002 and so is a large part of the reviews. In fact, the magazine should have being released before my Kogaionon #8 but I suppose there were some financial problems that troubled Negru for a year and so. All in all, it is a nice professional magazine with CD compilation included and a reasonable price. It is a step forward and I am indeed happy for Negru. I am not exactly sure of what this magazine is desired to be... either an Underground one or just about to adopt the attitude of the commercial ones and when I say that I refer to the way of conceiving the texts. There is a strange thing: it is said to have 500 reviews but in reality... there is only half... and something similar happened with the previous issue when it was said about 250 reviews and there were only 100. Damn reality... always drags us down! Dear Gabi, I notice American commercial pompous marketing techniques have reached you too... One more thing: if many reviews are not rather "happy" I find curious and hilarious to notice that all Code666 releases are treated with a great indulgence. Perhaps because he is The Italians' exclusive representing dealer in Romania!!!! Negura Music, P.O. Box 8-747, 300334, Timisoara, Timis, Romania, negura@negura.com, www.negura.com Rating: 0.90/1 (19.02)

TEMPEST(ROM)-issue 1, 2003 (20 A4 pages, Romanian, Xerox)

This is a very shy debut, with rather superficial materials, simple and puerile interviews and few very subjective reviews. I won't write too much about it because it would mean to criticize. I only enumerate some of the interviews: ENTHRALLMENT, ACVILA, LUNA AMARA, DEMONLORD, GRAVEN and STONE FICTION. As far as the imagery is regarded, let's say it is a kind of "Kogaionon #2", Word format-two columns and some photos with a precarious resolution. I appreciate the intention but I am disappointed by the result! Dan Adrian, Str. M. Eminescu N0.62, Ludus 4350, Mures, tempests@personal.ro Rating: 0.68/1 (02.02)

Nocturnus

One of the most remarkable bands on the American Metal scene came to an unexpected and sudden end, although the start was a very promising one. Many things happened during those almost 20 years and here it came the time for us to find out about a new version of what once were NOCTURNUS name. The interviewee is no other but Mike Browning, a gifted drummer, who, even if he had the luck of playing in many famous bands, is actually a man of some kind of misfortune. At least this is my interpretation! Before we start the discussion, I actually would like for you to read the introductory word Mike published on the CD he recently released at Karmageddon, The NOCTURNUS Demos, which is a collection of tracks already featured on the legendary demos released 15 years ago.

One of the most remarkable bands on the American Metal scene came to an unexpected and sudden end, although the start was a very promising one. Many things happened during those almost 20 years and here it came the time for us to find out about a new version of what once were NOCTURNUS name. The interviewee is no other but Mike Browning, a gifted drummer, who, even if he had the luck of playing in many famous bands, is actually a man of some kind of misfortune. At least this is my interpretation! Before we start the discussion, I actually would like for you to read the introductory word Mike published on the CD he recently released at Karmageddon, The NOCTURNUS Demos, which is a collection of tracks already featured on the legendary demos released 15 years ago.

The story of NOCTURNUS – by Mike Browning

'This is the story of NOCTURNUS and of how I created and formed the band. I was first in MORBID ANGEL from 1982 – 1986. After recording the first Morbid Angel LP "Abominations of Desolation" in early 1986, the band split in half. I being the Drummer/Vocalist, and Sterling Von Scarborough / Bass, left and found guitarist Gino Marino and in three short months the INCUBUS "God Died on His Knees" demo was recorded in early 1987. Shortly after the recording, INCUBUS broke up lasting less than eight months.

I then decided it was time to come up with my own idea for a band. One of my favorite bands at the time was SLAYER and their legendary "HELL AWAITS" LP was out at that time. I really liked the line "Nocturnal Spectre hiding from the light" from the song "At Dawn They Sleep" on this album, but I didn't want to use that name exactly. I got out a dictionary and saw that the Latin form of the word nocturnal was NOCTURNUS which has occult significance so I decided to call my new band NOCTURNUS.

I got in touch with Bassist Richard Bateman (who had just quit AGENT STEEL) and two songs were written: NOCTURNUS and B.C./A.D. After writing these two songs with only bass, drums and vocals, Gino Marino rejoined with me again and more songs were written.

Another friend of mine Vincent Crowley had just broke up with his band ENTITY and was asked to join NOCTURNUS also on guitar. Once Vince joined all his old songs were re-written and also put on the NOCTURNUS song list!

I had a friend that had an 8-track reel to reel studio in his house, so NOCTURNUS took four songs and entered the studio and recorded the first NOCTURNUS Demo, which was self titled. A couple of months went by and Vince quit NOCTURNUS to again start his own band which became ACHERON.

Right after that Richard Bateman left NOCTURNUS to join NASTY SAVAGE.

Gino and I then recruited Mike Davis (Gino's cousin) on guitar and Davis' friend Jeff Estes also joined replacing Bateman on Bass.

In June of 1988 NOCTURNUS was reborn with a new logo and outlook. A couple of months went by and some new songs were written and the band was planning on entering a studio by Halloween of 1988. While preparing the songs for recording Davis and Estes mentioned they had a friend that played keyboards and that we should get him to write some intros for this upcoming demo. In September Louis Panzer brought his keyboard to our warehouse and played an intro and we went right in to B.C. /A.D. While we were jamming Lou



started to play along with us and we all thought that this sounded like nothing else out there, so we decided to make Lou a permanent member literally weeks before the demo was recorded.

A long time friend of mine Jon Oliva who then was the singer for SAVATAGE was in a studio doing some pre-production demos for the next Savatage LP and asked me if the band would be interested in coming in the studio and recording a demo with Mr. Oliva at the helm. The timing of the universe was perfect and NOCTURNUS entered the studio in October to record the legendary "THE SCIENCE OF HORROR" demo, Jon even ended up singing back-ups on the demo as well as producing it. I came up with the title "The Science of Horror" and put the whole package together and began selling this demo and t-shirts which eventually led to the band signing a record deal with EARACHE RECORDS and releasing our debut CD "THE KEY".

After the release of two demos and two full length CD's, three of the band members, Panzer, Mc Nenney, and Davis trademarked the name behind my back in 1992 and then fired me from my own band that I started. NOCTURNUS only lasted a few months before breaking up completely after that.'

Hi, Kormos and welcome my magazine realm! There are very few to know you do have Romanian blood in your veins and that this is the name of your origin. How come that you have never visited my country? Could it be outlined or assumed any connection between all the occult elements that preoccupy your mind and your mother?

"Yes, my mom is into Witchcraft and because of that type of upbringing I was interested in the occult from a very early age! Both of my great grandparents on my mothers side were from Romania somewhere around Budapest (upssss-this is Hungary, my friend!-ED) I believe. I really wanted to play in Romania when we were touring with NOCTURNUS, but we never got the chance! My great grandmother's last name was Kormos and we always called our families affairs the Kormos Curse!!!"

As you could read my personal regards towards your luck, you'd noticed I considered you not that lucky since you actually played in two remarkable bands (MORBID ANGEL and NOCTURNUS) but enjoyed such for less than five years in each. Moreover, in the past 10 years, you actually entered a darkened corner and there were few to know of your existence and activity. Do you think I am wrong in what I said so far? I simply don't think the lady of fortune smiled towards you too often...

"Well, it depends on what you consider luck!!! I could still be playing in these bands with people I hate that stabbed me in the back or I could be where I am now owning my own house and 3 cars and a fantastic girlfriend that we both play Music together with and having sex with every night, so none of that would have happened if things didn't turn out the way they did. Actually, I have a nicer house and make lots of money, probably more than any of these other people do in those bands! I know I have a better house than the guys in Morbid Angel do!"

How do you feel knowing that something of your creation doesn't belong to you anymore and moreover doesn't exist any more!? Is it hatred, sadness, disappointment or indifference? The birth of NOCTURNUS is completely your merit and now you don't even have the right of using this name...

"Yes, the way it happened was terrible and I feel all of those things but like I said, now I don't have to associate with people like that that are greedy backstabbers! I think they really ruined the name and by attaching themselves to the name NOCTURNUS they were forever going to have to come up with a better album than The Key, which of course they never will!"

Although you were a fundamental member of MORBID ANGEL, today you don't have too many contacts with the rest of the members not to say they actually keep the distance. Is it a rock-star problem/issue or the world is simply under a perpetual change to which you refuse to get involved in?

"I would say more the rock star attitude that Trey and David Vincent have, I am sure most people know about David Vincent now going by Evil D, the bisexual bass player in the Genitorturers and all you have to do is read any interview by Trey to see how stuck on himself he is, maybe that's why he writes all the songs and doesn't let the other members in his band write stuff! And hasn't Trey gone through quite a few members too!"

What pleasant memories do you think might connect you to this band and tell me, are there any funny moments (in studio or live) that you remember now? What was the real reason you left the band?

"The best thing was the fact that back then we were a real Occult band and did real rituals as a band, now Morbid Angel is like a business corporation, they are a fantastic band no doubt, but if I had stayed in Morbid the band would be more like a Slayer style than fast death metal. The real reason of my leaving Morbid was because I caught Trey with my girlfriend and beat his ass and that was the end of me being in Morbid Angel! That's why it doesn't bother me not having to associate with people that have done bad things to me!"

Do you like what they perform now? Don't you think that Necronomicon, once worshipped has now nothing to do with their actual musical concept?

"I think they are getting back to that style, but I know that David was never really into anything but being a showman, he was never really serious about the Occult and I can't even tell you where Trey's head is at now, but have you ever talked to Pete about the Occult, he doesn't know a thing either about what his band is about, although he is a great drummer."

INCUBUS was an experience that never had the chance to last. Tell me what do you think it went that wrong? At least... as far as you are concerned...

"Actually, that time it was Sterling and Gino that had got into a fight when they were drunk and Gino quit the band and so I quit too and decided it was time to form my own band which was NOCTURNUS."

I understood Sterling actually tried to reinforce INCUBUS under a different title, USURPER... but I know nothing about it now... Tell me, do you know more?

"I only heard a tape that was supposed to be the Usurper demo, but the sound quality was so bad I really couldn't tell what was going on, but it sounded like the same songs rewritten."

NOCTURNUS has started the road in a promising formula but, right after the first demo, there were left only two (you and Gino Marino). Vince didn't get along with Gino and thus has decided to follow his impulses with ACHERON, Richard left for NASTY SAVAGE, while Gino's cousin was called to join you. After that, the story is that Jeff was Mike's friend while Lou was invited as friend of both to perform the keyboard for some intros and thus is ready the second demo. What was bad in the previous formula?

"You got the story right, but as far as the first line up Richard quit to join Nasty Savage who was huge at that time and we were a new band, so Richard thought he was going to be rich and laughed at us and said he was going to join a real band, well you know that wasn't how it ended up, because NOCTURNUS became bigger than Nasty Savage and then Richard got mad and said we used his songs, but in reality when he quit he said we could keep all the parts he wrote because he figured he wouldn't need them being in Nasty Savage and Vince just didn't get along with Gino ever, so he wanted to form his own band which I can't blame him for wanting that!"

Your friendship with Jon Oliva (SAVATAGE) has lead to such professional outcome for this very demo and also got finally concrete throughout a contract with Earache. Do you keep in touch with Jon? What is he doing nowadays?

"Jon is still a good friend of mine, every time I see him out we talk about the old days and the recording of that demo! Jon is a great person and a maniac! He still has Savatage and another side band called DR. Butcher which is really good metal in the vein of old Savatage and of course he does the Trans Siberean Orchestra which has sold millions of copies, so he is doing really well!"

I understood Gino had some problems with the law and thus... you are the only one left in the initial structure of the band. I think the real origin of the band started to fail... first you, Vince and then Richard and now Gino followed... Am I wrong?

"I think once I was gone NOCTURNUS wasn't the same, if that's what you mean, but NOCTURNUS only stayed together about 6 months after they fired me. I have never been in jail and I don't drink and make an asshole out of myself and I don't try to start fights with everybody, which was the case with most of the other members, except Vince who just got tired of Gino, he was a very hard person to get along with and still is that way, that's why he has never made it on a real record and only on played on demos."

Was the contract with Earache a good one? I understood that the debut, The Key, was sold in more than 70,000 samples. Have you gained some good money for such?

"The contract was not that good because we didn't really have a lawyer look at it and we signed away the rights to the songs, so because of that and the fact that we also got a lot of money for tour support on The Key, we never actually made any money off of the record sales because it all went back to the label to pay for our tour expenses."

It happened that it was the last material in which you could punctually express your viewpoint both as music and lyrics. As far as Thresholds was concerned, you were nothing but just a pawn, right?

"By that time everything we did was voted on, so they wanted a singer and I was outvoted, they wanted to change the lyrics from the occult to sci-fi and I was outvoted, basically all they cared about was trying to make money off the name, so by the time I was fired from the band I was actually happy to not have to play with those people anymore and I was glad to join Acheron which was a true Occult band. My interests are the Occult and I wasn't into singing about army men jumping out of airplanes like what the lyrics were about on Thresholds."

The tricky issue was that you actually were both the drummer and the vocal. Have you experienced many pressure-situations when one or another asked you to give up the vocals in his favor? It would probably have been for the best both as a scenic effect and for showbiz. Isn't it a similar scenario as in MORBID ANGEL case? Haven't you ever been reproached not to have performed vocals in an appropriate manner because of the drums?

"Of course, although I never had a problem singing and playing drums, we did a European and an American tour for The Key and thousands of people saw me sing and play with no problem whatsoever and actually in Morbid Angel it was never an issue at all, only in NOCTURNUS was it an issue because the other band members were jealous of me getting all the attention and writing all the lyrics, but as

you can see Thresholds was not a success, it sold about 25,000, whereas The Key sold over 70,000 and people actually were always asking me why I quit singing because they really liked my vocals and lyrics, so getting a singer and changing the lyrics was what actually ruined NOCTURNUS."

I remember Chris/AUTOPSY used to do both in such great manner! Did you take any other examples?

"I never knew about Autopsy until after I recorded The Key, I was singing and playing drums since the early eighties, which was before Autopsy was ever even a band. But I think Exciter had a singing drummer too if I am not mistaken."

You had some serious gigs, including Europe. How were they? What can you tell me about them? Tell me, how different was the European public from the American one?

"Yes, we did a great tour with Bolthrower and played a lot of pretty big shows and an American tour with Napalm Death and Godflesh. All The Key tours we did were really crowded shows with lots of people that really liked the band and when we did the Thresholds tour there were a lot of really small shows and not very good turnouts. I think definitely that the European crowds were a lot more into the music and the bands themselves."

The second album was sold at half of the samples of the first. Do you think a fundamental reason and explanation would be the fact you were not "the creator"? Or could it be the fact that those who bought the first were disappointed and didn't risk with the second...?!

"People really liked The Key, so I know that wasn't the problem and on the Thresholds tour, every single night lots of people would come up to me and ask why wasn't I singing and they would all comment that it would have been better with me still on vocals. But Thresholds only sold about 1/3 of what The Key did so you do the math!"

I find absolutely mean and despicable the way your colleagues worked you at your back. You said that Lou's envy might have been a good reason. They claimed you were not up to their actual standards. In fact what happened? Can you make light inside of such topic?

"Well, Lou wanted control over the band and did whatever he could to try to get it! And like I said by the time they fired me I actually hated everybody in that band and was very uninterested in even playing with them anyway, so at the time I was glad to be away from them. But lots of people have seen me play on tour and I have lots of bootleg tapes and videos and they all look and sound fine to me, in fact most of the stuff I even played faster live and sang and pulled it off live in front of lots of people many times! So you can make your own conclusions on that one!"

Are you aware of the fact that NOCTURNUS was labeled as the first Metal band that enriched the sound by introducing keyboard? This is not the truth but the fans still think so. What do you think about that? Well, otherwise, your style was defined as Technical Death Metal.

"I have been listening to bands with keyboards since way before I ever even started NOCTURNUS, I guess we were just one of the first Death Metal type bands, but I think we had basically become a Technical Death Metal band and that's not really the direction I wanted to take NOCTURNUS, I wanted to stay a bit slower and more atmospheric and Evil! But when you have new members they bring in their ideas and then the band starts to change.

ATHEIST and CYNIC were bands much closer, as far as musical direction was concerned, to what you did than DEATH or CANNIBAL CORPSE. Tell me, how do you see now the music they played years ago?

"Atheist and Cynic were fantastic bands! We used to play a lot of shows with Atheist and there may be a new Atheist out one day I know Kelly has talked about the possibility. But I think our style was more similar to those types of bands for sure."

Have you been present at Chuck's funeral? What importance do you think he had for the American Death Metal scene?

"I didn't go to his funeral, but I think Chuck was a very talented musician and he was always very nice to me and it really was a shame that he died, but at least he left some fantastic music behind, he was no doubt one of the best songwriters in Metal! And Death never used a blast beat or played super fast, but they got the respect of all Metal crowds!"

You participated beside Vince in ACHERON for a good time...just that at a certain moment you decided your job



was more important than else. Right? Or was it because you experienced some conflicts?

"No conflicts, it was my job. I had quit my job for NOCTURNUS after over 7 years of working there and after the band broke up I got my job back and still have it now! But Vince wanted to tour Europe for only about a month with no money guarantee and I wasn't about to give up my life and job here for nothing, so I told Vince he needed to find someone for touring and if he wanted I would still record for him, but the tour fell through anyway after I had left. I like to play Music but I am not worried about making money from it, that's why I work and then I can play Music still whenever I want and with who I want!"

I understood you joined modern trends and that you listen to DIMMU or CRADLE. Have you really given up MERCYFUL FATE or ANGELWITCH? To be frank, I find hard to believe you don't listen to Melissa or Don't Break The Oath… anymore. Tell me, what have you been listening to lately?

"I actually just bought an Angelwitch video off EBay a couple of days ago, so believe me my favorite stuff is still the old style, but that doesn't mean I can't like new bands either, I like Dimmu a lot and Cradle is OK and I just bought the new King Diamond and saw him play about 2 weeks ago! I listen to all kinds of Music but mainly anything Evil!"

In 1999, you have decided to bring back NOCTURNUS under a different name, NOCTURNUS A.D., but you've been warned by Lou as huge inconveniences would arise for you if using the same name or a similar one. Where from such hate? Tell me what happened?

"When I reformed NOCTURNUS in 1999 it was the 3 original members, me and Richard and Gino, so of course we wanted to call it NOCTURNUS which it really was the first real line up and then I got a letter from Lou and his lawyer stating that he now owned the name and that I would be sued if I didn't stop using his name, so in spite I was going to call the band NOCTURNUS A.D., but when Gino and Richard got into a fight at my house where we practice and Gino quit then I decided to drop the whole NOCTURNUS thing and just use the A.D. or After Death."

Little by little, we reached the present days and AFTER DEATH, your musical project, which actually might be a NOCTURNUS follow up. How would it be like if we talked…, after some years, that you had been kicked out from this band as well? What would you say about such?

"Well that won't happen because I have already trademarked the name right away, I will not make that mistake again!"

Well, you, Richard and Gino started all over again in 1999 and the only one missing from the initial formula, Vince, was replaced by Mike Walkowski. What was the feeling to get and see you all together again?

"It was pretty cool at first but then the same problems from years ago popped up again immediately, so you can say that for some people things will never change! I wanted to find a keyboard player too and actually started working in the Theremin into some songs and intros, so I was definitely thinking it to be a continuation of what I had wanted to do with NOCTURNUS back then and never got the chance to."

Gino's problems determined you to replace him with Scott Wallin and thus you recorded a 4EP song, which was never released. I've heard rumors that you didn't get along with Guido/Karmageddon over the price for the studio…and then…when the man behind the studio heard your lyrics he refused collaboration because of Satanist music… And so on… What is the truth? What happened?



"All that is true, we had a 1500 dollar budget for the EP and we spent 1000 on recording and when I was doing my vocals the guy that owned the studio and his wife totally freaked out on my lyrics, especially the line in Jesus Will Weep Again that says 'I am the maggot that infests the brain of Christ'!!! That was the one that did it that freaked them out and so they kicked us out of the studio. So we had 10 CD's of recorded tracks and had to go into a new studio and put it all back together and then finish recording and mixing and so that cost another 2000 dollars and by the time we were done we had a 3000 dollar bill and only 1000 was paid, so Hammerheart didn't want to pay for the rest so we made an agreement with Hammerheart to just drop the whole thing and we paid the rest of the studio bill and kept the EP, but never released it."

During the years, there were some other members as well, such as: Chris Farmer, Todd Williams or Bryan Hipp. Are you that difficult in personality so that people cannot bear your presence? Where from such fluctuation?

"No, I just don't put up with peoples shit, to be truthful Scott Wallin was a drunk, Chris Farmer and Lisa didn't get along, Todd Williams didn't like keyboards and Bryan Hipp was a pill addict. If I find good musicians without any major problems in their life then I don't have a problem with them, usually I am too nice and I get fucked over! Like I keep saying I only play Music because I enjoy to and if it becomes a problem than I have no problem cutting somebody loose right away. Lisa and myself and our bass player Tom have been playing together for 3 years without any fights or problems, so all we really need is a great lead guitarist with no problems in their life and that seems to be the hardest thing to find."

It seems like the actual formula is pretty stable if not the most stable, namely: you, Lisa Lombardo (k) and Tom Swain (Bass, v). You have already recorded two tracks in Erik Rutan's studio. What can you tell me about them?

"I found them OK… it is just that I think it is hard to drop conclusions so soon solely over two sequences... We had actually went in to Erik's studio to mix this 8 song 35 minute piece we recorded at our house and Erik made it sound really good, but he liked our stuff a lot and wanted us to record 2 songs from the start in his studio, so we did, so we have actually the 8 songs and the extra 2 new ones and also the Devine Essence demo CD that we all 3 played on as well that was recorded by Lee of Monstrosity. And Tom is also the bass player in both bands. Erik also wants to produce our album as well. We get along and work great with him in the studio!"

Lisa is your friend and it seems like in the last couple of years you've managed to produce many other tracks. DEVINE ESSENCE has transformed in LISA THE WOLF and those two tracks available on the web page simply sound rather too sinister, a strange kind of grave and profound Gloom Doom Metal. What can you tell me about this project? Curiously or not… it follows the same formula of trio…

"It's the same band really, when I joined Lisa's band she called it Lisa The Wolf, but we decided to give it a new name with a new band, so we called it Devine Essence, but everyone was always confusing the name and spelling it Divine instead of Devine, so we decided that Lisa The Wolf was much easier to remember, www.lisathewolf.com is very easy to remember!"

WOLF AND HAWK is Lisa's project and it is meant to be kind of JEFFERSON AIRPLANE mixed with TYPE O NEGATIVE with a traditional ethno percussion, a strange acoustics, with a mystical magical occult background. Could it be Lisa's expression/reaction towards what she studied so far? (I refer to music, of course). I observe even a discreet make up on your faces…

"Yes, you hit it right on target, most of the songs she actually wrote years ago and when I heard her play a couple on her acoustic and sing I said let's do something with that stuff, so we did. She probably has about 20 songs like



that and we even do acoustic versions of some of the Lisa The Wolf and Devine Essence songs too. And yes we each wear Egyptian Evil Eye face paint usually when we play live. It's very primal earth music."

What do you want/expect from all three musical projects?

"To satisfy my soul!"

In the past you have experienced as well the Industrial realm with DEACON SCREECH. What happened in fact? What about ASH?

"Deacon Screech gave me the ability to expand into electronic sounds on the drums, sometimes I only used an electronic kit when we played and sometimes I would use both, but I got to experiment with lots of weird sounds and keyboards and the shows were really weird since Deacon was more of an industrial thing more than anything, but it was really dark and evil and the lyrics were very anti religious themes and dark subjects, it was just a really weird and strange band overall. And Ash was just a little project where I did the vocals and some weird electronic percussion and Bob White from Paineater did the keyboards and samples and his girlfriend at the time did these really high opera vocals in the background. It was like horror movie soundtrack music with spoken word type vocals over it. The project was for us to do a musical version of Dante's Inferno, although we only completed 2 songs which was about 1/3 of the books story. It probably would have ended up being about 6 or 7 songs if we had ever finished it and it would have been really cool. Actually one of the two songs ended up on the Full Moon Records compilation CD."

Well, I cannot avoid returning to NOCTURNUS… and to be precise to this very CD released at Karmageddon. I understand you received money solely for your work at the booklet (which, by the way, it is an amazing one, having the gift of taking you back in time…living again emotions of 20 years ago…Congratulations!) Tell me, do the NOCTURNUS' members have the right to ask for money from Karmageddon for this material?

"You definitely have no right… I actually do as a matter of fact, although I don't own the name I do own the copyrights to the Science of Horror demo and I did copyright the demo back in 1988 under the name NOCTURNUS, so there is record of me using the name before Lou and the others trademarked it in 1992. But I don't want to get mixed up in that mess, so I just told Hammerheart just pay me for the pictures and the story that I write and Lisa and I took a lot of time finding and compiling all this stuff and scanning and sending it over to Hammerheart, it took weeks literally and together with their designer we put the booklet together, but that was my only involvement in the whole thing. But I will tell you a little secret, a US Trademark is only good in the US and for each country you have to purchase a separate trademark, so in Europe even NOCTURNUS (Lou, Sean and Davis) don't own the name! And royalties are usually paid 50% to the lyricist and 50% to the musicians, so regardless of who owns the name I would receive over 60% of any royalties due anyway. But there was no contract signed and I don't really care myself that Karmageddon has released it, to me just getting the real story of NOCTURNUS out to the people from the mouth of it's Creator was enough payment for me!"

NOCTURNUS has returned (without you) in 2000 with Ethereal Tomb, album released at Season Of Mist. Did you like/enjoy this material?

"I don't consider it a NOCTURNUS album when there is not even one original member on it!"

You live with the aim of composing music, not making music for a living. It is easy to say, but in reality, once you are in the middle of a contractual relationship, you start to make compromises as the business requires or not. Do you agree with me? Where do you think NOCTURNUS was wrong or made a mistake? What about you?

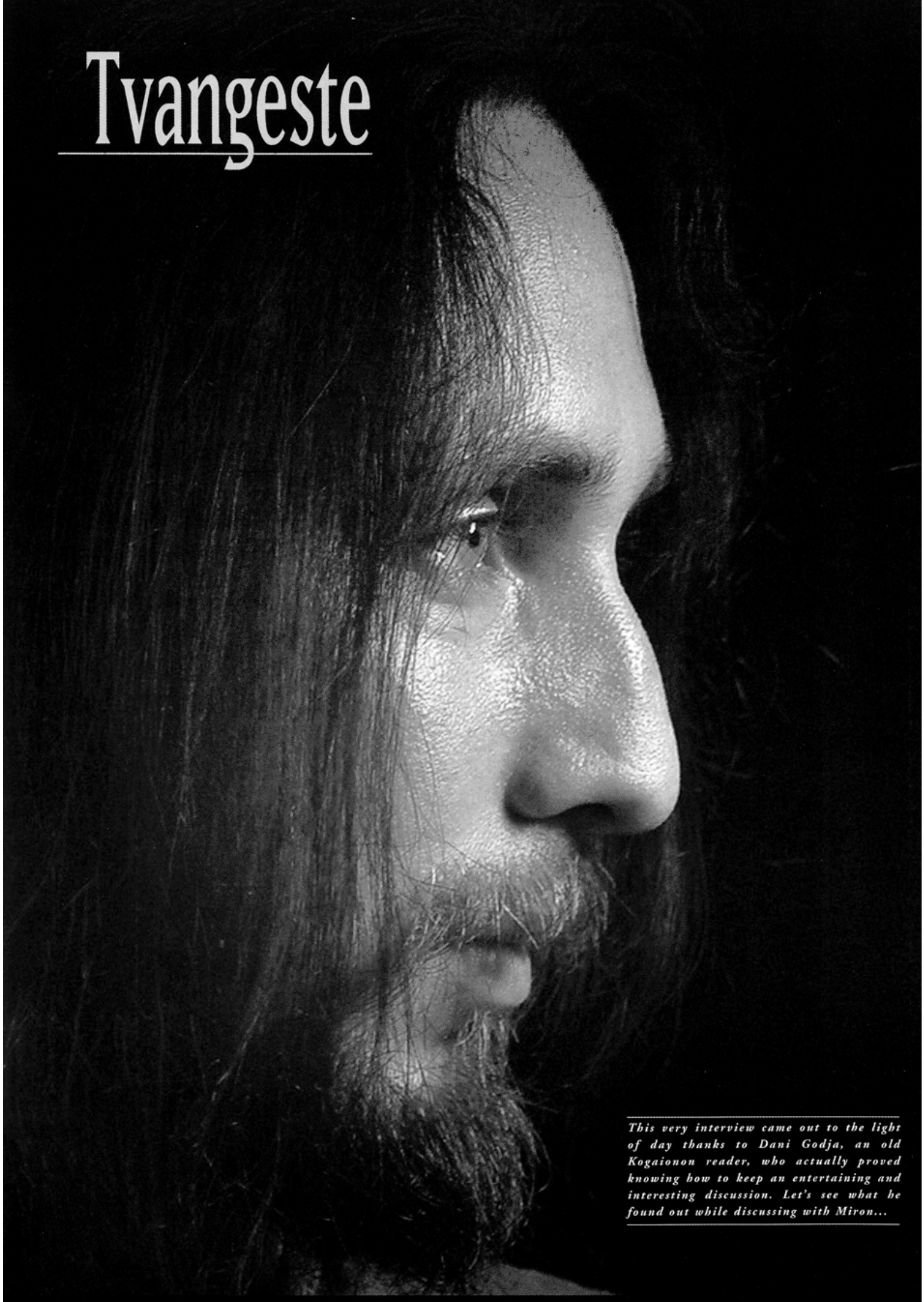
"I will agree with you on that, but it really helps if the whole band is on the same page and wants the same thing out of music and playing. I am not saying I will never sign a contract again, who knows what will happen in the future I certainly don't and neither do you, but I know that I simply won't deal with people that I am not happy to be playing with, anything more than that will be considered a plus. I just like to play and whether it's at my house or in front of a thousand people makes no difference if I am not happy about it and the people involved, I will tell you that I won't ever play with people like Lou again because it gets easier and easier to spot these types of people the older I get. I will only give my time to people who I think deserve it. Money is not a factor. Me being happy and satisfied is! And with NOCTURNUS the only thing those guys ever cared about is what they could make off of this or how changing and doing what the record company said we should do to make more money was always what they were after and I think it is very clear for anyone to see, it's as plain as day!"

Mike, thanks for granting me with such travel back in time, even if it might have been a painful one. I wish you for a life full of music, as many children as possible to visit the birth-places of their grandfathers (a subconscious source of inspiration for NOCTURNUS' lyrics and music, he, he… once again, Romania!) and please let me know… if and when you decide to cut your hair! Perhaps from that point you would start to perform something in STING style as Lou Panzer did before he became a NOCTURNUS member…, right?

"Actually that was after he was in NOCTURNUS, when NOCTURNUS split up in 1993 Lou joined a band called Cry Blue and it's the worst shit you ever heard and at one point he even became a born again Christian and burned all his NOCTURNUS stuff! He even burned the killer banner that we used on the Thresholds tour, but as soon as money started talking they reformed NOCTURNUS in 1999 and ended up ripping off Seasons of Mist on the second album advance money they never recorded. Nice guys aren't they! And about my hair, I am 39 years old and still have all my hair, why should I get rid of it! Most people have begun to loose theirs by my age!!!"

December 2003

Tvangeste



This very interview came out to the light of day thanks to Dani Godja, an old Kogaionon reader, who actually proved knowing how to keep an entertaining and interesting discussion. Let's see what he found out while discussing with Miron...

TVANGESTE's actual birth dates in 1997 when all musicians gathered in one place and started rehearsals. So many things have changed since those times... The first CD "Damnation of Regiomontum" was recorded in the end of 1999 and brought us a great success. TVANGESTE was chosen as "the best Black Metal acts in ex-USSR countries of 2000". Over 5000 CDs of this album were sold in CIS countries. In 2001 TVANGESTE has signed a contract with Norwegian label VALGALDER RECORDS for two albums. VALGALDER re-released "Damnation of Regiomontum" for Worldwide. For TVANGESTE it was a great step into the future. There were tons of great reviews. The album was played on many radio stations from all over the world. VALGALDER did a great work for TVANGESTE's promotion. The greatest magazines of Europe, South and North Americas and Asia interviewed the band. Mexican bought licensing on "Damnation of Regiomontum" and Indonesian labels. In June 2001 well-known British magazine Live For Metal gave a "Band of the Month" award to TVANGESTE. In the March of 2001 Naturelle (Miron's wife) joined the band as a keyboardist. Later her excellent abilities brought a great part of new, fresh melodies to the TVANGESTE's sound.

In the beginning of 2001 Miron and Naturelle began the new album creation. It was a horrible long work... months of laborious work. They decided to create not just a "Damnation of Regiomontum" sequel but something more professional, much powerful, really interesting, fresh and new. BALTIC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA was hired for this recording. It was amazing work with the professional people. Naturelle and Katya (first violin in the orchestra) created all scores for each instrument. 300 sheets of notes! Also PRUSSIAN CHAMBER CHOIR took a part in the recording session. With their greatest help TVANGESTE got a lot of dramatic vocal moments in the songs. It was the first experience for TVANGESTE to work with professional musicians and this collaboration helped TVANGESTE to find their unique style of playing metal music. In December 2002 TVANGESTE has signed a contract with World Chaos for "FireStorm" release.

At last! September the 1st - Album's out! So long awaited release date! There are two versions of "Firestorm" available now: usual jewel case CD and limited edition of Digipack (with absolutely different design and TVANGESTE symbol sticker). The album is available in many music stores on all continents. After only one month from the release date "Firestorm" got the top places in different metal charts from all over the world's metal magazines and radios! Sales are going just great! The album was restocked three times on RED STREAM and FOUR TIMES on another North American metal monster, Dark Symphonies. Many world Metal magazines have recognized TVANGSTE's "Firestorm" as "one of the best metal creations ever that will remain in world's metal history for ages"!!!! Critics that "Firestorm" got so far are just awesome! TVANGESTE attracted METAL MIND's (the biggest Polish metal label) attention. Polish guys have licensed "FireStorm" for Poland and Germany. One of the biggest Russian metal labels CD MAXIMUM has licensed "Firestorm" for Russian Federation and CIS countries + Baltic Countries. The CD was released up to the end of October 2003. WORLD CHAOS is negotiating with Mexicans and Americans about license deals.

Hi, Miron! Your new album was recorded and finally done in February of 2002 but it's out only from 1st September 2003, just because Valgalder Records and their financial problems. You also have a fresh contract with World Chaos from Japan. What else happened since "Damnation of Regiomontum" until now with TVANGESTE?

"Hails! Yeah, it was a big time space for us. After we got our first CD 'Damnation of Regiomontum' released through Norwegian label, Valgalder Records, we got a chance to show our actual songwriting skills. As it was agreed in contract we should record two albums for Norwegians so the second album was 'FireStorm'.... It was a great experience for us to work with real orchestra musicians. The album was ready in the beginning of 2002 and



that horrible delay was so annoying.... We thought that our work wouldn't be released at all but guys from Japan WORLD CHAOS made it real and after 1,8 year delay 'FireStorm' was released for worldwide in Japan. We got insanely great promotion from World Chaos and all that I can say – I'm really glad that we got such good support. World's Metal mass media's response was just fantastic! We got (and still are getting) a lot of great reviews and awards. Right now we are working on new album's creation. I can't tell you any details but TVANGESTE will enter studio next autumn or so...."

Some of you play in other bands too. Vano and Victoria play in Dis Pater. Victoria also plays in Bleeding Skies and Romowe Rikoito. Do you agree with that? Isn't it difficult to make music in such conditions?

"Yes. Not only Victoria has side projects. Vanoe plays in Dis Pater as a guitarist as well... Our new bassist plays in Equinox... Our drummer has two own created bands DOMINIUM and BRIGHT OPHIDEA. Only I and Naturelle concentrate on work in TVANGESTE and I think it's honest. Almost all music for 'FireStorm' was created by us so I don't mind that all members play in other projects too. TVANGESTE is a crew – for sure but all main music style, conception and performance belongs to me, Naturelle and Nikolay Kazmin (our guitar player)."

You and Naturelle play only in TVANGESTE and live for that band without any side projects but I heard you had some ideas about "additional" art. What's all about? Also, how does it go the work with your web development agency? Programmers/ designers have a good reward from such work there?

"Haa... yes. I'm glad that I have such good work and I'm glad twice that I work with my wife. We offer a wide list of design/programming services. As about additional ideas... well... we have a lot of thoughts in our heads. Right now we are going to start making our first movie. I am writing a book/manual about martial arts for one big Australian publishing house. Naturelle's painting a set of postcards with beautiful Polish town Gdansk" views. We have a great deal of ideas... but trying to concentrate on music... to make a priority to our new album."

Do you think technology is just a medium for humanity or, as a lot of people say, it will annihilate human fantasy?

"Well... I think that technology is a great help. I think that nothing can annihilate human's fantasy if fantasy exists in human's mind. Sometimes high tech even widens art's horizons... just think about 3D graphic or new possibilities in music creation. I think that people should use high technologies as a great help to improve their own ideas... to find new solutions."

The CD's cover was painted by Margo (a good friend of yours) and designed by Naturelle (your wife) at Avesta Media Studio. What can you tell me about the significance of the cover?

"We tried to make our entire album conceptual. So our main goal was to make a one indivisible piece of art. The CD cover is our musical themes' reflection... being a visual part of 'FireStorm' it completes our artwork and allows all listeners to feel our music deeper. Margo and Naturelle made a really good job."

On the last album you don't use Russian language like in "Damnation of Regiomontum" album. Why? Is there a chance to listen to future songs made in your native language or it's a final option not to use your mother language anymore in music? You want to be understandable for everybody or is it a way of looking for success and nothing else?

"I was asked about Russian language in our songs so often! Yes – I absolutely agree with you – Russian language should appear in our songs. Actually 'FireStorm' was created in two languages version: Russian (with really good poetry) and English (just translation made by professional interpreters)... My idea was to record our CD in two versions: one for Russian and Slavonic speaking nations... and another one for the rest of the world. Of course understanding of our lyrics was the main thing. But because of the low budget we weren't able to make two versions. And as You can gather - we recorded this album for western countries first and we were interested to be understandable for all over the world's listeners. New album (we are working hard on a new album now) will contain some Russian elements in clear vocals. As about wanting my creation to be understandable – Yes... our lyrics is a great part of music and I am interested in to be understood on all continents. English allows us to be understood and that's very important!"

Also almost all of Baltic Symphony Orchestra members you collaborated with were at beginning very arrogant but till the end almost all of them were impressed by working with a metal band and have changed their notion on metal music! To do this kind of changes in their minds needs proving certain professional abilities. Where did you get that education?

"Yes. There were some complications during recording session since all classical musicians (OK – almost all) think that classical music is supreme thing.... that there are some brilliant composers like Bach, Mozart, Tchaikovski and that's all... so they think that if music they are going to play wasn't made by great composers of past centuries – they wouldn't play this music! Because of this strange point of view some of Baltic Symphony Orchestra even rejected our invitation... but right after CD was recorded, mixed and mastered many of that guys recognized that TVANGESTE's music has all chances to be accepted by professionals because of the interesting and unusual structure, frequent rhythm and tempo changes etc... I'm glad to hear that because I respect classical school musicians and their opinion's very important for me! I don't have any music education but Naturelle, Victoria and Katya do have. Katya's and Naturelle's work on orchestra arrangements was good! I'm glad by the result but... now we have a great experience how to record real orchestra, how to collaborate

with classical guys and for sure our new album will be much more professional in all ways! As an additional important factor – orchestra recording requires insanely big money. We managed to record all orchestra and choir for record low sum - $1500 and to be honest it doesn't sound like real big orchestra because of the many things like: track by track recording. We weren't able to record all orchestra in one place… it costs so much… so we did a really great and very hard work but our music is still far from the thing I call perfect sound. 'FireStorm' was a big step to the top of metal Olymp but we have to work hard to improve our skills and make something real!"

TVANGESTE was a small site of ancient settlement destroyed in 1255 by Teutonic knights. In this place was a knights Castile, Koenigsberg. Which are the most interesting moments of the Prussian history? What is the most characteristic feature in the Prussian character?

"You know… in 1255 Christians destroyed a small settlement TVANGESTE… by the end of XIII all Prussian land was conquered and almost all its citizens were either killed or assimilated to German culture…. Prussian culture, language etc. were lost…. we decided to remind people that our region has a really rich and interesting history… to remind people that before German part of history this Land was populated by absolutely unknown nations… to show people the true face of Christianity… I hope you understand why I can't tell you about the most characteristic features of Prussian nation…"

I heard about some of TVANGESTE members that didn't even have a chance to visit Russia! How is possible?

"Yes... it's true… our Kaliningrad region is a part of Russia… it's a small piece of Russian territory between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea shores…. If you'll take a look at the map of Europe you'll understand everything… After Lithuania's applies to be a part of European Union were approved they closed their borders… We can visit main Russian territory only by crossing some borders… one of those borders is Lithuanian one… So we have visa to visit Russia… insane thing isn't it?"

In early days you had problem with your logo, an ancient Prussian symbol that means heaven (sun and clouds), and that was confused by many people with a Nazi symbol. A similar problem had also Adhur from Spain. Do you still have this problem? How much these stories affected on you?

"That's true – You are extremely well informed! Our 'Damnation of Regiomontum' cover was with the symbol on the first page and many German labels and music stores said 'NO'... because all kinds of symbols that even slightly remind swastika are prohibited. Damn – sometimes people are so... hmm… not wise… of course it affected too bad on all TVANGESTE's promotion in Germany… there were some talks that 'TVANGESTE is Nazi…' so I'd like to declare that we respect all nations and all people while they respect us. I don't care if somebody has not the same nationality or skin color as I have… the main thing for me – attitude… and if somebody doesn't care about me – I don't care about him… if somebody's attitude to me is bad – he'll get the same attitude to him."

In "FireStorm" there are two main lyrical lines... one of them is an ancient Prussian history and anti-religious feelings. Another (and the main) part of your lyrics is thinking about human mind and soul in this world. All songs are dedicated to STRONG FREE INDIVIDUALS, to people that have their own point of view. Can you describe deep message of this album?

"Yes… in all interviews I use one line from our lyrics that describes our thought in the best way:

To be or not to be / There's no such question! / To be! But to be WHAT? / A weak-willed sheep that's taken to the slaughter house / Or a proud wolf / Whose heart is filled with freedom? / What's in your eyes, Human? / Fear or Rage? Blind Submission or Resistance? / Love and respect your friends / And let your enemies die!"

The spiritual part of TVANGESTE's music is FREEDOM OF MIND. So, what are your favorite psychology orientation and writers? Also, which are the books and writers that helped at the creation of your personality? I know you find a lot of wise ideas in Nietzsche's books indeed. In what way his philosophy influenced you and what is your favorite theory?

"At the beginning of TVANGESTE's creation our goal was too trivial and even childish: to unleash the war against Christianity… yeah…It was a nice but funny time… young people… after some years I understood that Christianity is just a part of big iceberg of different treatments which goal is to make slaves of people… Religion, Law, Education… every main bases of the modern society are rotten – aimed to grow weak willed mass… strong and wise people are very dangerous for the System and our attempts are to call to people's INNERSELVES… to make people THINK USING THEIR OWN BRAINS… to make people BELIVE THEIR OWN BELIEVES…

Every sheep needs a shepherd / Every shepherd needs a sheep for his flock. / They are walking to the horizon of their ideas / Trampling the sprouts of freedom and despising pride / But rise above the Earth and you will see / WHERE this herd is heading … / It's heading to the precipices.

I don't agree that I was influenced by Nietzsche's books…actually I've read his 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra'… that's all… I prefer my mind guiding me in this world…"

In complex, what is your life's philosophy?

"It's simple: BE YOURSELF. BE STRONG. BE WISE. LIVE YOUR LIFE. I don't want to write a lot about it since these main topics describe everything the best way. Just believe in Yourself and let your mind be Your guide."

If your music and your ideas could be expressed through images, which kind of figures and colors could better describe it? As you say it somewhere, the main thing in music is IDEA and SOUL of the composition. Can those things be described into images?

"Hmm… to be honest it's hard since all the time music themes have different feelings… this way music could be associated to different image forms. I don't think it's possible to describe our music using just limited quantity of pictures… You'll need a picture gallery to get a full conception! … and Yes – SOUL of the composition is the main thing for me… music should live… sound should breathe…"

Themes from "Firestorm" will be used as an official soundtrack for "Sinners and Saints", a mystic action movie with some erotic elements. How did they find you? Can you tell us more about this movie? Also, what kind of movies do you enjoy and why?

"'Sinners and Saints' will be out up to March 2004 on DVD and distributed by some big companies. It was an interesting thing because the movie's producer Melantha Blackthorne is our fan. Melantha sent me a letter with the offer to use some themes from our new CD for their movie as an soundtrack…after some talks with World Chaos we got agreement so I'm dying to get this movie! As a matter of fact – our next video will be made of the best fragments from the movie and will be available after New Year. I can't tell you anything since I haven't seen it yet… just a trailer… so I'd say it should be an interesting movie for mystic/erotic/action lovers. He he… the kind of music I like… well… I'm a great fan of Jackie Chan's movies."

Valgalder, and now World Chaos compare your music with some big names as Dimmu Borgir, Cradle of Filth, Therion, Old Man's Child for marketing reasons without caring about your advises. Don't you have any right to describe yourself the music without comparing it? In this case you will stay at WCP for the next album?

"Actually it's one of the bad sides of our promotion. After our 'Damnation…' release Valgalder made a big mistake! They described our style as a Dimmu, Old Man's Child, Enslavement of Beauty… and we got a bunch of reviews 'Dimmu followers… a great Old Man's Child's influence… etc'… we were compared to Enslavement of Beauty so many times! And I even have no idea what these guys play! I've heard one song from old Dimmu's stuff (Mourning Palace) and their new CDs only! But we were compared to 'Stormblast' I hardly can imagine how it sounds! In spite of all these problems, 'Damnation…' has got really good responses. After our 'FireStorm' release I asked World Chaos not to mention any well known bands to prevent new comparisons… You know that's always like this: label sends CD for review and a small description of the band… kind of 'press release'… so all reviewers simply read it and after listening 1-2 tracks write a review according to the words in press release. I warned World Chaos not to mention any bands but they decided to use Cradle of Filth and Therion … maybe it was wise business decision since Cradles are so popular… but because of this crap we have various comparisons… almost in all reviews… thanks to those people who honestly listened ALL our tracks and have written honest review! But it's WCP's album and they are free to call our style like they want. They are too good to blame them for this crap!"

I now you are an old style Metalhead, you like more complex music, skilled musicians, Bach's strings, Paganini, soundtracks from the movies (Jerry Goldsmith, Alan Sylvestri etc) and your dream is to make a conceptual symphony to be performed for serious classical music lovers. Another dream of yours is to make music for movies. Is there a chance to do it soon?

"Yeah… we have an agreement with that Canadian company so we'll create music for their next movie I hope. It's really an interesting thing for me! This work will widen my own horizons. I'd love to write a true symphony and even think to incorporate some parts of our both albums into one classical conceptual creation that would be performed by a big orchestra. I always liked skilled musicians and complex music since it's so interesting to listen to music that is changing all the time… that allows you to flow in the stream of sounds to nowhere!"

Do you think that dreams can give hidden messages, that later might give you the possibility to use them for writing your lyrics or music? Do you think the universe could influence our life and in which you might feel yourself as a part of it?

"Yes… I really believe in it and I think that there's one general energy information field that contains all information about everything. And when you are thinking about anything hard – solution will come. Remember poets' inspiration… sometimes it comes to poets in the nights… sometimes somewhere or sometimes else… mathematicians say – 'if You can't find to solve a problem… thinking hard on it… just go and sleep and solution will come'… and almost all the time solution 'strikes' to the head… not logically… simply 'boom!... here I am!'… So I believe in something like general power grid…"

You practice martial arts since 1989 and you still dream to play in movie with Jackie Chan, your favorite actor. Do you make something to release this unconventional dream? How did you get in contact with this sport?

"I was a small boy and was simply impressed by Jackie's art in his old movie "Drunken Master"… right after that movie I came home and started my first training… it was

funny but it was my first step. I'm grateful to Jackie since then… because of his movie I don't smoke, have no idea about alcohol's taste (even beer and Champaign!)… I can lift 250 lbs, I am able to fight with a group of enemies with my hands only…I know how to use simple match box as a weapon to kill. That's good to have such lifestyle for me since it suits to one of my main motto: BE STRONG. People should be strong since only strong persons can feel themselves really free without any discomforts…

I hope that my dream one day will come true. I'll visit Hong Kong for sure to apply for small role… he he… You never know! Maybe my tries will help me to express myself in new kind of art?… we'll see…"

You say somewhere that Russia had the best martial art system. Can you tell us more? How could such help you not to feel stress and fear, and to control your emotions?

"Actually yeah – it was a complex system of body and spirit training. Ancient Russian warriors (it's a true fact!) were BODYGUARDS FOR CHINESE EMPERORS!… but this greatest martial art was lost and now we can see just small parts of it… but even those small parts show the difference between usual Karate or Kick Boxing and Russian style… Russian style is close to Chinese WUSU… but based on different movements and principles… I can't tell how it can help you not to feel stress and fear, and to control emotions because I am not an expert in this style and I have just approximate idea about it. As about martial arts generally – I'd say that training your body you train your spirit as ancient Chinese or Japanese said. There is a great deal of different methods to work with your mind like meditations. The main idea is to speak to your sub-consciousness… to think without thinking…"

The greatest experience of your life was the army period (for two years), as an explosive specialist. You are also famous because of your interesting gigs. There are a lot of lights, pyrotechnic, ancient martial arts elements like swords fighting... I think your shows are a result of your past-education. You still pay by yourself such? Is any chance to have support from WCP to put a gig on DVD?

"Ha ha.. ohh… noo… all pyrotechnic effects were made by our good friend Dmitry 'PyroDimych'… he's a true professional in this field. He is able to make explosion showy and spectacular – I can just blow a building or a car (very useful specialty in our days... he he… Army wasn't so good and useful time for me. We are thinking about making DVD… some short fragments will appear on our site soon."

Also I heard you don't like gigs, noise... you prefer silence. What does silence mean to you and on which occasions do you feel and listen to it?

"He he… there's a good expression: SILENCE IS THE BEST SOUND. Sometimes I agree with that! I really don't like gigs…I like music and I prefer to listen to it in good CD quality in headphones in the comfort of my home. Of course live shows are very important... They give to fans so gig energy… but I believe I'm just not that kind of people… I understand guys that like to go to concerts, stage dive etc but I prefer more quiet way of spending time in the Naturelle's company… I'm not a misanthrope but I can't say I'm sociable… just trying to live my own life…"

Does World Chaos have any plans for touring with you in foreign countries?

"They offered us two tours but because of some great problems we weren't able to accept both offers. Also we get about 3-5 live shows invitations every month… I missed concerts with Ancient, Moonspell, In Flames etc… because of the inner problems and visas we won't be able to play live abroad for some time."

Did you keep the contact with Cezar Mielko, the drum-



mer from polish band DOMINIUM? What can you tell about your guests on "Firestorm"? Will you ask for their help for the next album?

"Yeah! We are friends! I respect this guy for his excellent drums playing abilities and… be sure he'll join us for our new stuff's recording! Actually this album is featuring so many guests! I'd love to mention Olaa – our magic female voice that was acclaimed as 'one of the best female vocals in metal for all times'. You know - we are very lucky! We got an excellent drummer, our new bassist Max Naumoff is maybe the best musician in the band – he plays bass as Dream Theatre's bassist! Olaa… and her talent helped us a lot on our debut album "Damnation of Regiomontum'… after the CD release we got a great deal of letters from our fans 'add more Olaa's vocals on new CD please!'… so we did!.. On the new album Olaa will appear even more often!"

Your first video, "From Nameless Oracle", was made by SELANI studio (Poland). What can you tell me about the new one? It should have been included on the CD but…

"We wanted to add a multimedia track to our CD but for some reason we can't do it. Anyway both our videos everybody can freely download from our official web site. To be honest I don't like this video at all and think it's not professional… we got an offer from Alex Chendon ('Cradle of Fear', almost all CoF's videos)… but his price unfortunately was too high for us… I believe that the new video (featuring 'Sinners and saints' fragments) would be much better."

You want to invite on the next album, if budget is big enough, some musicians from the 'stars' of metal music...not black...like WASP... to make something more powerful, energetic, with more riffs, more orchestra parts... Kind of Fear Factory-TVANGESTE-Rhapsody mixes. I heard you would work again with Baltic Symphony Orchestra and Prussian Chamber Choir for the next chapter of TVANGESTE suite. What can you tell about that and when should we expect your new album?

"Yes! I'd love to ask Blackie Lawless to join us for one track recording since I believe that his voice is a true diamond! And it's so stupid when young metalheads say 'who's Blackie Lawless?... what does WASP play?' As about our new album – we are working hard on new material! Prepare for a great deal of new and fresh ideas… TVANGESTE's 'Damnation of Regiomontum' was completely different from 'FireStorm'… so our next stuff will be different to 'FireStorm' as well… it's kind of evolution of the band. I don't like to remain the same… I want to create different music. It will be a really interesting album. Now we have a great experience in collaboration with the real orchestra, choir… we know and remember all our mistakes during 'FireStorm' recording and be sure – we'll do our best to prevent all crap during next recording session! The CD will be more aggressive… more guitar… but we'll save our difference in themes. Choirs will be performed by another choir and we'll do it really professionally (to add choirs to 'Firestorm' we decided during recording session so it was just an experiment for us). Orchestra sounds will reflect even more powerful… we'll add many new instruments… more winds… more kettle drums… also we have a great deal of new ideas I can't tell You about now since it's kind of secret… to tease people… prepare for really good and interesting musical composition!"

You want to work for next album with Fredman Studio from Sweden. Why? Selani Studio from Poland it's not so good as you want? Or is it much too expensive? How much would you pay to record an album there?

"SELANI was a cheap studio… it was the best way for us to record more or less good quality CD because there were some guys that were experienced in metal recording. It's the main thing for me – Metal mind of sound engineers! Our sound master was Szymon Czech and I'm glad by his work… but I don't like our sound and think that guitars and basses should sound absolutely different… and it's possible to make in Sweden since as far as I know DIMMU, IN FLAMES, SOILWORK and others have excellent guitar sounds… so I'd love to get the same!"

I now you like geography and to travel too. What is your favorite country, place that you visited or you want to visit?

"I'd love to visit China, Japan, South America's forests and Africa's savanna. But I'm interested in all World's countries… I had a chance to visit almost all European countries but I hope my dream about world wide trip will come true one day…."

Thanks Miron for the time used to answer all these questions and I wish for you to make available all your dreams....

"Damn! You got the first place and the "The Longest Interview' award indeed!! Thanks a lot! I appreciate so detailed interview. It took some time to answer all questions (remember – I answer 1-2 interviews DAILY now!). I thank all guys (and girls) who have finished this interview reading since it wasn't so easy… I hope we'll get many new friends in your country! Thanks for the chance to introduce TVANGESTE for Your magazine's readers! If somebody wants to ask the band about anything: just write to post@TVANGESTE.com."

November, 2003

BEAUTY OF PAIN PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

VOIDBLOOD

MASS MURDER GENESIS





Malefic and unholy, spreading ideas of crime through the ways of Black-Metal... Showing that Evil never dies... A mass murder destruction.

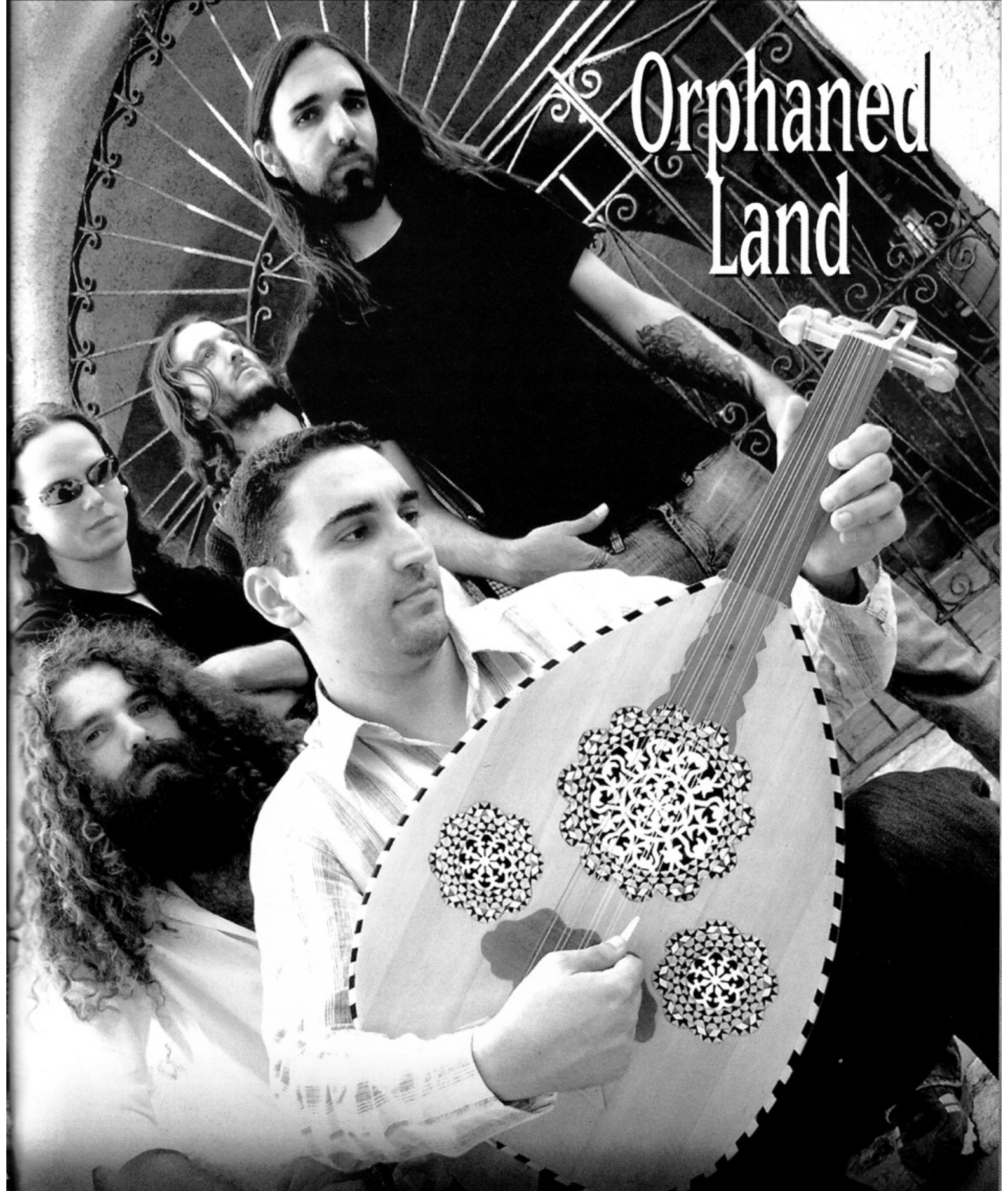
CD with slipcase - 10 Euros / 12 USD
"Unchain the Wolf" MCD - 5 Euros / 7 USD
TS - 13 Euros / 15 USD

ENJOY THE BIRTH OF MURDER!!!

Send well hidden cash or ask for bank details at this address :c/o BRANDUSESC ALEXANDRU, PO BOX 970 - 12,1900 TIMISOARA, TIMIS, ROMANIA
beautyof@mail.dntim.ro, www.beautyofpain.go.ro Write for our free mailorder catalog (more 6000 items). DISTIBUTORS WORLDWIDE WANTED!!! BANDS SEND YOUR PROMO FOR A POSSIBLE DEAL!!

DISTRIBUTED BY: BULGARY - BUTCHERY MUSIC/BRUTALLICA; SERBIA - AWAKEN; HUNGARY - STYGIAN; POLAND - PAGAN/ECLIPSE AUSTRIA - NAPALM; ITALY - AVANTGARDE/FULL SPEED AHEAD; SPAIN - DEATH TO MANKIND; FRANCE - ADIROCERE/HOLYRECORDS SEASON OF MIST/SACRAL; GERMANY - NO COLOURS/SOLISTITIUM/CYCLONE EMPIRE/GRAU MAILORDER/CHRISTHUNT/KETZER; FINLAND - FIREBOX; USA - RED STREAM/MORIBUND/FMP; UK - SUPERNAL; HOLLAND - DISPLEASED; SCOTLAND - GOLDEN LAKE; JAPAN - WORLDCHAOS; RUSSIA - STYGIAN CRYPT;

Orphaned Land



These talented Israeli have succeeded to reach a status of a cult band thanks to the musical style they had approached: Oriental Traditional Metal! Founded in 1991, under RESSURECTION name, they actually made a very good impression right after they changed the name and released "The Beloved Cry" demo, back in 1993... They signed with Holy one year after "Sahara", a brilliant unique album, is released. Two years later a new material was out: "El Norra Alila" and then... the big announcement as they had signed with Century Media (even if they negotiated with Nuclear Blast as well!). In 2001, on January, I performed an interview with Kobi Farhi, the band's vocalist, for Kogaionon no.7, just to check out if the band was still breathing (almost 5 years passed since their last album). Well, that was the time you had the chance to find out all details regarding ORPHANED LAND... of which I decided to point out solely some ideas already overviewed by my interviewee and which might still be of actuality...

The name of the band...

"Reflects a paradox to the name 'Holy Land' it continues with our lyrics (making Metal and praising God) and concepts ('El Nora Alila-God Of Light/Evil of the Night'), I think that a paradox creates some kind of harmony and circle closing between the original message to the opposite one, when you know Orphaned Land is a paradox to the holy land, when you think about it you start to think about the holy land first, then you think and understand why we see it as an Orphaned Land-one point leads to another point-the second point is total opposite of the first point, same goes with the yin-yang symbol-you can find two different sides on this symbol a black with a white dot and the opposite of it, it's two half that create 'The One'-a harmony between Black and White. This is Orphaned Land-in our music God dance Tango with Satan (check the lyrics of 'The Evil Urge'), one half cannot exist without the other..."

First album

"I will always have string feeling for every creation we made, it reflects a period in our life. 'Sahara' will always be dear to me. I can remember the first time I saw it out on a CD. I looked at it for 3 hours without moving. I read every word maybe 20 times! 'Sahara' was a risk to us, we were experiencing things that had not tried before on Metal music and we didn't know what might be the reaction and result, I'm glad we succeeded. The reason we have chosen this name is for several reasons: The situation in the Middle East is like a storm on the Sahara desert and it's also a very oriental title for a Metal album so it's like a clue of what is going to be the root of the album, we also decided to put pictures of Synagogues, Mosques. And it all was a big lesson for us: the demo songs were re-recorded for the simple reason that they are good songs in our opinion that needed to be exposed on a CD."

Second album

"Indeed it is more complex than 'Sahara' but I don't agree that it's less melodic. I think it's more melodic, especially the vocals, the concept is stronger as well and really paradoxical: 'Shir Hashirim' is one song uniting three prayers of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam into one united prayer. For me the album is very strong and means a lot and it is a very important step in my evolvement."

Reprinted demo

"We are far from being rich from our music and it is not our strongest desire, we did release our demo 'The Beloved's Cry' on a re-issued CD version, the result is great! It sold thousands and it includes a rare live CD-Rom bonus of 'Seasons Unite' from 1993 and also a mixture of rare photos, flyers and posters from the past!!! This is especially for collectors!!'

Religion/Faith

"When you believe in something, there will be always a test which is coming to test your belief, to see how strong, true or maybe false it is. I am a strong believer of my truth and I think that a belief is the strongest tool a man could own against every war he is fighting inside himself or outside, I will try to be Metaphoric: try to think that you have a dream that you wish to achieve, see it as a shining long dot in the dark space, you start to walk to this shining dot of light, but still you walk on the dark, so you fall, you eat shit, you have doubts or I don't know what but still when your belief is strong, you can eat the shit and the dark together because every step you make is bringing you closer to achieve your dream. I think that the way to the light is full of shit but it's worth it."

"We are not religious people in the normal way that society defines it, we create our own rules and beliefs, it is another kind of religion, and Orphaned Land's message is our strongest belief!!!"

We entered 2004 and I must confess, I've been listening to this new album, "Mabool", times and times over and over again... a real masterpiece (read the review)!!! A new discussion now...

Hi my brothers! Explosions, violence, blood all over, fights on the streets, plenty of criminal acts...it all seems like the Wall, which is about to "grow" higher and stronger, between Israel and West Bank has real chances to compete with The Great Chinese Wall. Tell me, what is the meaning of all that? Do you feel more secure?

"Hi brothers, this is Matti from Orphaned Land. This interview will be a combined interview between me and Kobi, the first part of it will be answered by me, and Kobi will answer few questions later on. Enjoy! **(Hi Matti!-ED)**

I can see that this interview involves some political issues, and as much as I would like to get into details I cannot, simply because it won't be fair declaring my political stands here (and I try to have as less as I can possibly have), because Orphaned Land is compiled from 5 different people who don't share the same mind and therefore cannot have the same thoughts. The whole situation, as you can probably understand by watching the news, is very complicated, and I'm sure that you'll forgive me if I answer some questions very briefly."

There were very many criminal acts



(over 19.000 in the last 10 years), many peace attempts but it finally led to nowhere. I am really curious… how do you see this fight… after all… a religious war?

Matti: "You know, I don't consider this war to be a religious war at all… this war is not happening, in my opinion, because of religious issues, but because of political ones, and the religious side of it is irrelevant and very small. I think that it is difficult for someone who is out of the conflict to grasp what is going on. However, if someone really wants to understand the issue and know the core of the conflict from an 'untouchable' source, he must look for reading materials on the web and I'm sure he'll have a lot to read!"

Kobi: "I think this never-ending war is an outcome of combining politic with religion, it's very dangerous and rare to know how to do it, and fact is that no one succeeds so far."

The holy land is more troubled and tortured than ever. Could this land be an orphaned land… even if its history is more than overwhelming? Tell me, do you assume there might be any optimistic perspective over there? Watching TV… it's like seeing a terrible awful motion picture… and the images are scaring and tearing your heart apart while the war seems to be just in its climax… I am sure that being there it's even harder… Where from such hate? Do you agree with this war? Do you find it just and justified?

Matti: "I think that there are some acts that can never be justified. I disagree with this war and I'm for trying to find as much a peaceful solution as there might be, and I honestly believe that a peaceful solution exists. I can see the allegory that you made here between this land and an 'Orphaned Land', and I wish things would not look like they do, but unfortunately they do."

Kobi: "We always have hope, at the end of the day no one wants war, children are dying in wars, in our music, we take so many conflicts, so many things that doesn't get along, opposites and we combine them with harmony and understanding, with a lot of patient, belief and respect – result is: orphaned Land's music, full of colours, full of elements, everyone can find a piece of his culture there, Imagine how it will be if enemies in this region will find their harmony with each other, we hope that our music will help a bit for that."

How does your nation see Bush's politics… as far as Baghdad is regarded? I think that your area became a powerful source that might cause the start of a new world war…

Matti: "Bush is Bush and Clinton is Clinton, and if any of them would like to come and be special guest musicians on our next album they are more than invited to…"

Kobi: "I don't have a politic opinion except, 'stop killing your own kids….'. I never voted at the election, I don't read news paper or see news, I hear what happened anyway as all speak about it."

OK. Let's hope peace would embrace sooner and sooner your land and Israel could be again a touristy destination. So, let's talk about our special issue: music. Has anything changed in a fundamental manner from what we've talked almost three years ago? I mean… ideas, concepts, approaches… and so on…

Matti: "Peace WILL finally dwell here, I know it, I have a strong feeling that there will be an understanding here soon. And now to the real issue of the interview! To tell you the truth, I don't really know what Kobi and you have talked about in your last interview, but I think that I can say that many has changed in the last three years… Three years ago Orphaned-Land was only starting to recover after a long 7 years break, a decision was made to start and work on a new album, and now the album is fully complete and will be in the stores in Europe on the 23rd of February (the official release date). Through these 3 years there had been many changes, we had to keep flowing upstream, we are getting more 'mature' you might say, and I guess that you can hear this 'maturity' on the album itself in some ways."

Kobi: "We still live the same dreams only this time, the gyre is on full power, unlike the period we did the last interview."

I think I should mention the actual line up as a change. Why did you replace the drummer and the keyboard-player? What happened to Itzik? Can you help me with details? Who are they, the new ones? Where do they come from? Where did they play before?

Matti: "There have been some changes in the line up like you said, Itzik Levi (who by the way is a very successful psychedelic trance artist, named 'Sandman'), has left the band many years ago, I guess he needed more time to work on other projects. Instead of Itzik came to the band a wonderful person, great keyboard player and a very talented musician, Eden Rabin. Now the work with Eden is much different then the work with Itzik, Eden is much more involved in many issues, including the writing of the material, and it has been a pleasure working with him on 'Mabool'. Also as you can see we have a new drummer, Avi Diamond. Avi is a devil on the



drums and he did very good work on the album, we are all very pleased with him."

Let's make reference to your new album... a material released after eight years of silence... at least this is how I see it from the outside... The truth is that you had many conflicts to face inside the band... like who might be the leader...who should give up pride... like who could make compromises... What actually happened? Was it because of lack of maturity... too much pride... to much of ego?

Matti: "I won't lie and tell you that things like that didn't happen, because I think that it is obvious that things like this happen in every band every now and than, it's only natural. However, there was always a more mature and reasonable side in Orphaned Land; we never let these minor conflicts disturb our work, or our creativity, or even our friendships. There were other things that brought the 7 years 'calm before the flood'; I think that it was more from the side of the need of each member to explore and to know more, to travel and to see different things. Only after we were all sure that Orphaned Land is a strong part of our lives and that we all understood that we are actually in love with this project and willing to give up other things in order to make it alive, that we decided that we are reforming the group, even after this long silence."

Kobi: "Orphaned Land is a strange band who comes from a strange place, all the problems that we had with life or ourselves, all the quests we made in order to find our inner truth, led back to Orphaned Land, I was amazed after 6 years of silence to receive hundreds of mails from Arab countries and to see some Arabs fans with the tattoo of OL's logo!! Suddenly we realized that all conflicts are bullshit, we feel that the world need Orphaned Land music and we cannot let ego, drugs, or any other thing to ruin it."

Let's get even more detailed! Congratulations for this new album! This is a real challenge for any Metal fan! Yet... why exactly 68 minutes duration? You could have made it a little shorter... and in a few months to come out with a MCD...

Matti: "We haven't really considered this option you just mentioned, simply because of the fact that after such a long break (more than 7 years since 'El Norra Alila'!) it was obvious to us that we are entering the studio in order to record a full length album, and to tell you the truth, I wouldn't have regretted it if the album was 74 minutes long, or even longer. It was a pleasure recording every minute of it, and there's always the chance to re-enter the studio in order to record new MCD, or a new full-length even..."

Kobi: "Our albums are quests, we like them to be long as a journey, it's in our nature of creating and composing, so far, I get feedbacks that despite the long length, it never get boring and I'm happy to hear that."

I am really shocked and touched by the complexity of vocalizes! Shlomit's warm voice, choirs of female voices, your aggressive clear voice... this is a fantastic fusion of vocalists into the same sound! And I must say that the Oriental influences simply have the merit of pointing out some amazing inflections of those voices there! Tell me... was it hard to record on that many vocal channels? Tell me something about those choirs... where from are they? How did they appreciate your music?

Kobi: "Recording this album and especially all the vocals (and my personal singing) was a nightmare and a-dream-come true at the same time, I could cry from happiness and frustration at the same day! The arrangements of all the guests beside the band members were a big production of headache, but it was worth it, of course."

Matti: "Shlomit's vocals on the album is also a great part, I like her voice who is influenced from 'Yemen' singing, you can also hear some influences from the Israeli singer 'Ofra Haza', who recently passed away. The Arab influences on our music are very strong, we are combining in many parts Arab instruments, Yossi plays the Oud, the Saz, and Buzuki (this is the first album Yossi plays ALL the Arab string based instruments). There is also a great percussionist, Avi Agababa, who gives to the music a much more mystic side with his mysteries and bizarre shape instruments. There is a female choir, the 'Moran' choir, and it's actually made of about 15 Israeli girls (teenagers I mean) who sing very nicely and very professionally. The girls from the choir liked what they have heard of the album very much, every time that I talk to some of them they ask me when the album is coming out and when are they getting their copy of it..."

You play/sing in six languages... Why so? Who can understand any longer what you want to say!? I mean... one can get confused...

Matti: "There are 6 languages involved in the making of 'Mabool'; English: which is the main language of the album; Hebrew: which is used sometimes when Kobi is reading a text which is taken directly from the bible; Latin: which is used in a song called 'Building the ark', in this song the choir sings chapter 6 from Genesis translated to Latin; Some Arabic; some Yemen (Shlomit, our female vocalist, sings it) and 'Gibberish' , and to those who don't know, Gibberish is a language that is all made up from non-sense words, but you can also make it sound nice. Now I think that there are many few people who can understand 100% of what is being said, but that's the whole magic I think, who said that everything you hear you must always understood? Where would it leave your imagination if it was fed up by known things all the time? Besides, there is a certain magic to ethnic music when it's sang in a language you cannot understand, it just makes the experience more whole, and that's the whole idea in this case also, despite all that, all these parts have a translation near them in the album's booklet. The album is a concept-album, and it tells the story of the biblical flood, only with some changes that were put into it and made it as the 'Orphaned Land's flood story'. Each song tells a different part of the story, from the birth of the heroes, through their



visions and quests, until the coming of the flood itself. There are much too many events in order to get specifically into some, but if you listen to the album from it's beginning until the end I guess you can understand for yourself the chain of events, even though in some parts you don't understand the language."

Well… this is a bloody knotty and diverse sound! You seem to oscillate from Progressive and Psychedelic to Doom Death and Black Metal! I understand that it has been more than seven years passed but… isn't it a risk that your fans might get confused… especially if they are mad about extreme frames?

Matti: "Yes, the album does take you beyond some borders of a 'regular' Death Metal album, and, as people, we have changed a lot since the 'Sahara' and 'El Norra Alila' days. But I guess that the same way we have grown more mature with the years, our old audience have grown also more mature and will understand our changes, and I also believe that there will be a new audience, much younger one, that will find something in our sound. You can't always satisfy everyone, and when you yourself are satisfied… that is the thing which makes it all worth for you, and as far as I can tell all the band members are happy with the outcome, and so is some of the audience."

Kobi: "I think that even though we had some developments, the band spirit and soul still exist in the same vein as it was in the past, most of the reactions that I got were that the album sounds exactly of what we had to bring after 'El Norra Alila', fans are surprised to see how it is alike our past material and only got better."

I do admit there is magic in those Oriental touches and they really did strike me again! They are indeed outstanding! I suppose it is a real art to mix Metal with such traditional elements… either if Jewish or Arabian ones. You are a Metal band… one of a kind! Isn't there any risk for you to be misjudged by those who are very fond on religion… and even accused of musical profanation?

Matti: "Those oriental sounds are something that we have discovered a long time ago, and as far as I can remember we were the first ones to put this element into Metal as a motive which is repeating itself throughout almost all of our songs and albums. Personally, I like Arabian music very much, I like to play with oriental scales and compose riffs with those scales, I just fell in love in it and now it's too late to turn back. Whoever thinks badly about our love to oriental music or whoever is too self-centred and thinks that the world revolves around him and his needs to express himself, may say what he wishes to say about our musical influences, I personally think that if he doesn't like the music, let him not listen to it, and that's that."

Kobi: "Since our music is so harmonic and full of instruments, the instruments we use don't play in their native area, so there is a price those instruments have to pay by appearing side to side with Metal, but Orphaned Land has found the formula of how to minimize that. So far, we didn't get any bad reaction of what we did, all say that it is something they've never heard before, and that's a great comment even if at the end of the day they like it or not."

How come that you didn't ask for the help of Yossi's family… his father… his sister…? On the previous album, there were three tracks in which the Jewish music wasn't mixed at all with Metal ones…

Matti: "Who said that David, Yossi's father, was not involved in this album also? His part was a little smaller than the one he did in previous albums, but in 'Mabool' he sings, as a part of a thing we call an 'Oriental Choir', and if you listen you can hear him sing in a song which is called 'Norra El Norra' on the album. His sister, Hadas, no longer sings with us, she is now doing other things in life that don't leave her much time to come sing with us even though were in touch and she heard and liked 'Mabool' a lot. Yes, you are right… In the previous albums there were some songs that were completely 'Arab', like 'Joy' for example, or 'Shir Hama'a lot'. In 'Mabool' there are a few songs which are completely non-Metallic also, and in them you can hear some motives from Arabic music, but however they are not as extremely oriental as the ones from previous albums, you are right. I can't really explain why this thing happened, I guess that maybe it was because we have put more Arabic instruments into the Metallic songs, and therefore felt more satisfied with that part. Maybe."

I really am a profane ear…as far as the traditional instruments are regarded… having no idea which they may be… Can you picture me the universe of those traditional instruments… oud, saz, buzuki….?

"The Oud is a very Arabic instrument; I don't really know its origin (maybe Egypt? I think it's from Andalusia origin) but I do love its sound. Oud is a guitar with a very big stomach, the griff is very small and you have 4 double strings. The Buzuki, a traditional instrument that comes from Greece in its origin; It has four double strings; it is much decorated with oriental ornaments. And the Saz is an instrument that, if I'm not mistaken, comes from Turkey. Very long and thin griff, 3 double strings, build out of wood only. Now all of these instruments aren't such 'exotic' or 'special' to the Israeli listener, since there are many artists here that use these instruments in their music. I cannot really explain the sounds of each instrument, you just have to listen to them play yourself in order to know their special nuances. Me neither, I cannot explain the sound, saz and Buzuki have a golden colour sound, that's the only thing I can say in order to describe it, Oud's sound is closed and not open, it's like the sound is choking in a way."

I think I can hear besides synth and piano… some violin or cello echoes… am I wrong?

Matti: "The violin in the album is played by a guy called Oren, and the cello is played by a guy called Noam. These instruments are played as live instruments and not modulated by a synthesizer, it was very important to us to use as much original instruments and sounds as we could. Oren and Noam recorded their parts in the studio, and they also wrote some of their own parts!"

I found very inspired choosing for acoustic and classical guitars… and those prolonged solos send me to OPETH or… (why not?!) Santana's tunes… Do you think that if I mention of Joe Satriani I exaggerate?

Matti: "Are you kidding? Joe Satriani has been a great inspiration to us guitarists (he's Yossi's favorite guitarist and one of my favourites), it's nice that you could hear his influences in the solos. Personally I don't know where the guitar world would be without the guy called Joe Satriani. OPETH is a band which is very fond on Orphaned Land members, and I like their guitar work in their albums very much, they're good guitarists!"

There are many guitar riffs that remind me of SEPTIC FLESH first album. Do you still listen to such music? Do you still keep in touch with bands under Holy Records or even with the guys from the label? Philippe has talked in very high terms about you even if you left the label back in 1997.

"We are in a great connection with Holy Records, I also speak with Efthimis from NIGHTFALL from time to time, I'm always listening to Metal music even though that a bit less than in my youth, Septic Flesh are great… I was sorry to hear they split the band."

Do you think that I am wrong if I perceive "Mabool" as a journey into a universe placed out of temporal laws… into a Middle East that only takes what it needs to go any further… and otherwise closes the eyes…? In this very case I really cannot tell for sure if we talk about traditional music with Western influences (Metal) or about Metal with so me Oriental touches… Where should start one and end the other? Could you outline an imaginary border… or a GEOGRAPHIC border if we keep the same tone of discussion…?

Matti: "That is a very hard question to answer, because each song was written differently and its roots came from somewhere else. Some riffs were written on a classical guitar, or even on an Oud or a Saz, as riffs that are meant to have a more 'oriental' ring in them, and these were riffs that we used as bases for songs, so you might say that it was traditional music with Western touches. But on the other hand, we had some riffs that where written on a distorted guitar, and they were riffs that meant to sound metallic and their roots are metallic, since we all at Orphaned Land come from the background of Metal, and these riffs started out songs that finally had some traditional influence inside them, so it is impossible to draw one clear line that will divide the oriental sound from the western sound. Maybe if you use what I have just said as a metaphor, you will be able to understand some more about Israel and the mentality here, that is really a mix between east and west, and that could be the geographical border that you tried to look inside our music."

Kobi: "I agree with Matti, I think our music has no borders."

Who is Jan Meininghaus and what is the significance of that storm from the album cover?

Matti: "Jan Meininghaus is the artist who designed the front cover of our album. I don't know what were Jan's thoughts when he drew this amazing piece, I only know that for me this work is linked directly to the concept of 'Mabool' and it describes some of what I can see in my mind that the flood would look like in reality. There is a strong emotion in this wave, and beside emotion you can also sense motion, when I look at the wave I can almost see it moving!"

Kobi: "We directed Jan by sending him two paintings that drowned by William Joseph Turner at the 19th century, first painting was The Flood – Shades of Darkness and the second was The Morning After The Flood – Light and colour, according to that he started to work and he achieved exactly what we wanted."

I understand that the album contains (in a limited edition) a bonus CD with five acoustic tracks. What can you tell me about this one?

Matti: "These 5 acoustic tracks were recorded on a live acoustic show we had in Tel-Aviv on August, 2002. We have had these tracks for almost a year 'on the shelf', since we decided to record the show, and we thought of releasing the tracks somehow because some of them sounded good, and it was a waste not doing anything with them. And then, when 'Mabool' was almost ready and there had been some talking about a limited edition release, we thought that nothing would be better than having these tracks as bonus tracks for the limited edition."

You used to tell me you received plenty letters and messages from your fans, from Arabian countries, and they were messages of friendship and encouragement. Isn't is somehow strange and illogic? Or maybe your music could be a kind of bridge between the two religions that never came to live in peace together…

Kobi: "Our music is beyond borders of religion or culture, it's simply a mixture of colours, an Israeli and an Arab can listen to it and feel that it represent them not more then the other, still I cannot say that I was not amazed to discover the way Arab people understood what we speak about, I think it gave us the strength to continue with the band for a very long period! What else, more important than that can we do if our metallic music helps to make enemies as brothers again."

Matti: "We have got much support from the direction of young people who live in Arab countries, which are in a political conflict with Israel, countries like Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and more. (We also have listeners in Jordan, but gladly with the latter we have come in peaceful bonds in the last few years). I find this fact very thrilling, because that when we started this project, I think that the last thing we thought is that this would be the effect. It came as a surprise, and a very good one. There is nothing that can tie stronger bonds between countries that consider themselves each other's enemies, than bonds of friendship between citizens in them. The album was also printed in Malaysia, and from there it was distributed to many Muslim countries. I think that this is the first time an Israeli band gets to be distributed in this part of the world. Many Muslims' listeners love for our music went very far, some of them tattooed our logo on their bodies, an Egyptian listener have spent six months in jail because he was caught possessing our material. The fan base in these Muslim countries has no doubt made us stronger spiritually, a new window has been open to our music by that fact, all the relationships between Arab's and Israelis revolving it have turned many people to ambassadors of hope in the Middle East."

If tomorrow you were invited to play in a band from Libya or Palestine, what would you do? I think your decision should come after an accurate analysis of all consequences that might occur in your band or your group of close friends… or relatives…

Matti: "Are you serious my friend? If an opportunity to perform in one of these countries hypothetically came to us, we would definitely jump on the opportunity and the last thing that will stop us will be someone else's opinion. The only thing that will eventually stop us, I think, would be security matters. I think that by going to one of these countries we will be putting ourselves in physical danger, since I'm sure that there will be many people on the other side that will not welcome us warmly. Now that I re-read your question it makes me smile a bit, do you really think that we will suffer consequences from our close friends for it? And if someone will wish to speak badly of it then let him speak, but this will be the last thing that will stand between us and between making a dream like this come true."

Kobi: "I will do it with pleasure but on a one main condition – the massages of the songs that we will sing will not be politics and will not take any side at the stupid conflict, actually, I hope to do it very soon, if someone can help, let him contact me about it."

I know that in Israel there is a great discipline as far as the army is concerned including women… am I right? Tell me, are you obliged, by law, to join army?

Matti: "Yes, the law obliges you to go to the army; Israel is a small country and has many enemies. There is a thing here, that when a child asks his father: 'will I be in the army too when I grow up?', then the father answers him: 'when you grow up there will be no war so you won't have to go to the army', but somehow this thing never comes true, and everybody here, when they turn 18, eventually join the army, yes."

Kobi: "Army is a law here and I guess on the reality here it's a must, I did only 1 year out of 3 cause I had to choose between the band or the army and I felt that I will contribute more through music. But then again, this could be the right pick for me only."

How can you describe the relationship you have with Century Media? I suppose they are pretty pissed off on you since you signed up the contract back in 1997 and released an album only in 2004! Right? Is it a contract with advantages for both sides? At least financially….

Matti: "Century Media had been nothing but great with us. I don't know what went through their minds when they got the idea that we are not going to record anything back in 92 or 93, but they have many talented musicians to work with, so they just waited to see what happens with us, and I don't think that they have suffered any loss from it the fact that we decided to have some rest. When we started talking to them some years ago about our plans to record something new and sent them some sketches of our new material, they understood we were serious and started cooperating instantly. When they heard the final outcome they were very pleased and gave us much credit for it."

Kobi: "Originally, the 4th release of OL was scheduled for January 98, I didn't have the words to explain the situation that we were and we didn't want to give that dream after reaching that far, I guess that at some stage the guys at CMR stopped to believe for what I was saying but after all they were patient and CMR as a big and respected company had other things to deal with while we were here, searching ourselves, I remember when I sent the sketches for 'Mabool' to the A&R department, I was praying in the middle of the post office, the sketches were bad and you couldn't get 10% of what you get in the final result of 'Mabool', but as you can see, all was just to bring us to this day, stronger than ever, thank God."

I think the idea of having some tours is just about to charm you… right? What are you expecting from now on? What would be the fans' expectations? Any surprises for stage? I hope Matti wouldn't forget again the guitar in backstage while the fans would ask BIS over and over again…. he, he, he…

Matti: "I hope you guys weren't talking behind my back now… Yes it's true that it has happened once, I was very excited and went on stage without my guitar… it was very funny indeed when it happened! But yes, having a tour charms us a lot, I think that it was always one of our main goals as a band, something more like our real dream. I don't know what will be the reactions from 'Mabool' and if it takes us touring, but if it does, we will be thrilled by the idea, and the hole concept will be a little bit hard to grasp at first."

Kobi: "I will be very disappointed if we do not tour the world!"

If we don't mention the war… I assume that life in Israel follows western Occidental rules… even if you live in Middle East! How do your neighbors accept you? You have long hair, play something that can anytime be considered "Satanist"… Aren't there some drastic rules as far as religion is regarded? How can you cope with all these "details"?

Matti: "There is no religion based on rules here that forbid Metal, none-what-so-ever. People here can listen to any music they like and dress as they like, no one is bothering them. I'm sure that there are some fundamentalists who would be happy to force some of their opinions on others, but these people are such a minority here, that they are not even considered a starting of a problem. The majority in Israel is liberal; our eyes are set to Europe and the US in everything that has to do with progress and liberalism, we really see ourselves as a part of the western world, even though we are not quite there yet, and have many to learn from both."

Kobi: "Israel is a democratic place, we have the freedom to get dressed or speak almost about what we want, it's a mixture of cultures placed in one and I guess that in Israel you find that East meets West concepts many times. In Arab countries, few km away from here the situation is different by billions of light years, I have a book with a photo of OL and that book tells that a guy in Egypt who is a fan and listened to our music, got in jail for 6 months because of it!!! This is unbelievable, I wish I could meet him one day…"

"I consider myself as a son of God more then I consider myself a Jew"… this is an incendiary affirmation. How would your neighbours react if knowing what you declared? What do you actually say by claiming such?

Matti: "It's so like Kobi saying a thing like that… and I admire him for that because in many fields we share the same opinions and views, and in this one also. But to tell you the truth, my views are a little more extreme that his, I don't consider myself a Jew by religion at all (only by nationality), and I also don't believe in God. What Kobi meant (and I hope he won't be angry at me interpreting him), is that there is a certain priority for a man when he defines himself and what he sees of himself in the world. What Kobi meant was that he sees himself first of all as a human being, and only after that as a Jew. When he says 'son of god' he doesn't mean that in the Christian way, but in a purer way, he mainly says that he is a believer and believes in god and that god has created the world. I have been a believer for many years, but I recently came to a conclusion that I'm putting on myself chains and fears that I can do without. But I know Kobi's views, and when I was more involved in this 'spiritual quest' I shared many of these views, I think that they are very healthy and logical for a believer."

Kobi: "Well said Matti."

Since you are a Jew… no matter what you think, may like or not… tell me, please, what is your point of view regarding all these new Nationalist movements… Neo Nazi or else… that came to a great renewal in the past years, especially in countries such as Germany and Austria (Hitler's birth place… btw!). Do you feel any resentment for this nation? Not to forget that after all you are paid by a German label… he, he, he….

Matti: "I think that the Jewish people as a nation has learned a lot from what happened so many years ago. It is not right blaming anyone, not now and not ever. Every man is a master of his own fate and the responsibility of surviving is on his own shoulders. All this hate that is coming for nothing is nothing new, we learned to live with the fact that some people think that solutions to some problems will come from ways like 'getting rid of this or that" and thinking that the problem lies there, not seeing that the problem has more to do with their way of thinking, and until they change that their feelings towards the world will never change. We learned to live with that, we know it's there; we won't let it bring us down."

Still in the spirit of the previous question, I wonder what do you think about Varg Vickernes (BURZUM)… his music, ideology and Arian concepts? What about his acts… he just tried to escape…

"Everybody has his own way to heaven, I have nothing with this kind of belief but I wish him all the best."

Very few come to know you actually run a label that promotes diverse musical styles. From MDMA it now turned into No Label. Can you develop this idea…and tell us everything about this label?

"I always liked to deal with music from all kinds, my CD collection contains more then 800 CD's from all kinds, on the music business I mostly dealt with Trance and Electronic music but Metal as well, I left MDMA after the return of Orphaned Land, we did some great things there but it was all over for me cause when it comes to Orphaned Land, it was always my biggest dream of all, today I almost don't do nothing except Orphaned Land and I wish it all remains like that."

You collaborated with some less known projects. One of them is SUBTERRANEAN MASQUERADE and you recorded for it a Peter Murphy cover version. What can you tell me about this band? I know they signed with The End and that you were on Thomas Lindberg side…

"I'm in a good connection with Tomer from Sub and I'm sure that they will make a big noise in the future of the scene as they are talented, singing side to side with Thomas was a dream come true, it was always fun for me to co-

operate as guest on projects, it's fun not to be on the deciding side and to be a guest, it is always interesting and more calm to me than the OL projects where the pressure is high and I'm always in the middle…"

You actually performed the vocal parts for a Gothic project, MAGAL. I know nothing about this project…

"Magal used to play drums for many of Israel's underground bands, he also played with Orphaned Land on one song (Paradise Lost cover for 'Mercy") today he plays with a Black Metal band called Sitra Achra and he works on his solo projects which mostly sounds very Gothic and Dark, I was singing as a guest in one of his EP's on a song called 'The End', great song!!"

You also played beside a conational female vocalist, Nili, who lives in France. What can you tell me about her? What does she play? How was the collaboration you two had?

"Nili is great, I learned a lot from her, what a diva! I also preformed with her, it was scary, usually you get to have your own fans and you feel like home, it was different here and it was great! I also recorded together with her and Matti an acoustic version to 'The Beloveds Cry' which in my opinion is the best version ever."

I know about a new cover version you are about to do with MOONSKIN…

"It's a cover for a tribute CD to the godly At The Gates, song is 'Raped By The Light Of Christ' though it doesn't sound like the original at all, I think it's a great cover, I'm doing there the clean vocals."

What other musical collaborations you had and which bands would you like to play in? What about the other members… in which other projects were they involved in or would like to be involved for the future?

"Eden was involved with some of the past Metal bands in Israel such as: Mercenary, Mid Autumn Night, Grimoire, Enochian Key and today he also play in his fusion band: Right On Time, beside them, the rest only dealt with OL, I guess it was because the lack of time and reality here, personally I hope to co-operate on more music acts and not from the Metal scene as I already do and will continue to do, I want to explore more styles, but then again to live with OL always as my main creation."

If I correctly recall you entered the Metal dimension once with "Seventh son of a seven…" Do you still listen to IRON MAIDEN?

"Definitely, they are the best top Metal band ever."

I know you still like Beth Gibons. How did you find the album: acoustic guitar, female voice… do you often come to listen to such music? What other albums have you found on your tastes lately? I am curious, what CDs do you actually always keep in your car, besides the ones that come and go…?

"It depends on mood, some can fit winter, summer, night time, some CD's fits best when you are with friends, some fits the best when you are with your girl, I can listen to everything because there is the time when no matter what is the CD, it fits, recently I bought the new album of Air and I was blown away from it, I like their early stuff and this is one of their bests."

Three years ago only you and Yossi had a job. Right now, all of you have reached the age of 30 and you should be on your own… earning money for your living… right? Do you have families, children?

"Yossi is the only one who is married with a child, as it seems to me, Eden will be the next (touch wood) and Uri after him, me and Matti are still kids I guess, as for works, all the bands are working today and hoping to quit their Jobs and to make a living from Orphaned Land."

You live in a beautiful country… If I ever come to a point of visiting your country … could you draw a tour for me so that I wouldn't miss anything? What would this tour be like? Tell me, what should I never miss seeing if being in Israel?

"Well, indeed it's a great country, you have here a snow and a desert, Jerusalem is the most beautiful city ever, the desert, Eilat, Mezada, the North, it will be a very colourful journey, not that long… since the country is 500KM and that's it… but it will be something to remember."

I do confess, there is a track which seems to be the most beautiful that my mind/heart has ever experienced, "The Storm Still Rages Inside"! It simply discharges a certain romantic aura… an exceptional nostalgia embraces me while listening to this particular track! Is it a song of farewell of goodbye? Or maybe all tracks, future ones, are about to follow the same musical line? Well… it would be nice… wouldn't it?

"Since 'Mabool' is a concept album, 'The Storm Still Rages Inside', as one before the last track on the album reflect the situation where the 3 heroes sit on the ark, the orphaned land was destroyed by the flood and they yearn to their beloved father to save them, I can guarantee to all the orphan fans that if they didn't cry listening this album, this will be the song that will enter their heart, even today, it's hard for me to listen to this song without having tears in my eyes."

Kobi, we know each other for more then 10 years. No one could have ever thought that during all these years you released no more than three albums… If we entered future… ten years ahead…, what would you prefer answering me in 2014 about you and your activity? That you would rather be a father for 10 kids, with a shaved head… going your beard reaching your knees… mumbling prayers at each meal…and after all earning his existence because of selling various cheap stuff… and above all… listening (hidden in the toilet room… he, he) in the headphones… what else than "Mabool"… In other words, where would you like to be ten years from now on?

"Sometimes I don't know if what we are doing is helping in a way, 10 years ago, when we released Sahara we sang about the same things, still reality here is the same, but I guess that without hope we are lost, I don't like to speak about the future as it is forbidden, I can only wish that 10 years from now I will sing about fairytales and ancient stories and not about a sad reality, I hope that Harmony and prosperity will come to all the sons of God, and 10 kids sounds great to me, just let me find the right Mother (I have patience, so, be efficient!!!-ED).

Thanks for the longest interview we ever did, it was great to do it and I thank you for every minute of dedication and love you gave our band, may we meet soon in an OL gig in Romania!!!! All the best my brother."

February, 2004



Tristania

TRISTANIA, a famous title for Gothic Metal scene, has been covered up by mystery and peace in the past months. Moreover, right after ending the accounts with Napalm, the Norwegians have been looking for better more attractive offers. For the time being they are working on a new album, which is supposed to be released in the summer of 2004. In order to have news and various details I decided to interview the guitar player, Anders Hoyvik Hidle, the one who, alongside Einar, actually "run" the band.

Hi Anders and welcome Kogaionon's realm. Pretty hard to hear of you and about you these days... what happened? Why so? Some are saying that your silence actually is a strategic manner of gaining time until you receive the most convenient and attractive offer to please you. Tell me, is it all gossip or what?

"Thanks! First of all: it's not me and Einar who 'run' the band. There are seven individuals in TRISTANIA who run the band together. Each of us represents a necessary piece of the band. Off course, there will always be members who spend more time on the band than others, but I think that is a quite natural thing for most bands. We are currently doing the finishing work on the new album, and we have booked Top Room Studio in Hamar, Norway, for April & May. After 'World of Glass' we did pretty much touring both in Europe and Latin America. We took a couple of months 'vacation' from the band after that, before we started to work on the new songs. The 'silence' has nothing to do with strategy or 'gaining time'. It's all about taking the time you need to become satisfied with the new album. We made a decision on that... we wanted to focus solely on the writing process and to wait with touring until after the next album. It's a great thing to tour, but touring is pretty difficult to combine with song-writing – at least for us it is. Instead of doing the composing fragmented between the tours, we wanted to focus only on this. We didn't want to rush anything, but took the time that we wanted."

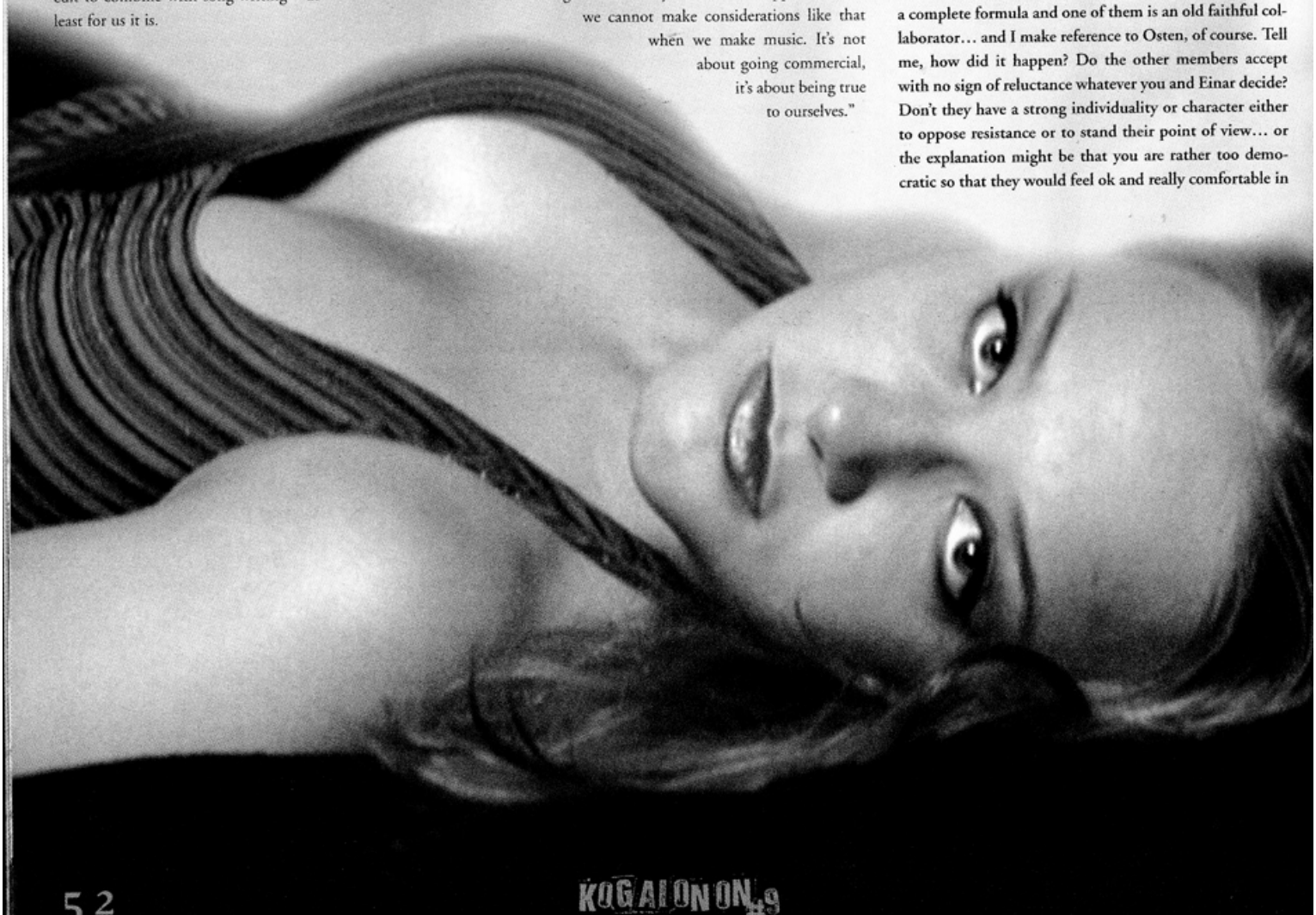
Your last album has reached a real great success but this was not an obstacle for some of the fans to consider the new sound as rather too commercial and to actually suspect you of treating music solely as business- a way to make more money... what is the truth? Is the album exactly as you wanted it to be or commercial?

"I don't like to listen to our albums very much, because there will always be things that irritate you and things you would have done different if recorded the songs again. I have this relationship with all of our albums, and 'World of Glass' is no exception. Despite of this, we are very satisfied with 'World of Glass' in general. It's probably our most complex album, and also the most diverse one. I think our three full length albums represent three different stages of the band's evolution. It's a natural process when we compose music, and we would not have been able to make albums if we would be that cynical toward our own music. We develop ourselves all the time, and our music reflects that. We will never make the same album twice. Some of the die hard gothic fans may have been disappointed, but we cannot make considerations like that when we make music. It's not about going commercial, it's about being true to ourselves."

Morten's departure, as far as I know, had as a basic ground the same accusation pointed upper and reproaches of this kind followed. I've read one of Morten's interviews and he explained that the fundamental reason, which determined him to leave TRISTANIA, was the fact you two (Einar and you) thought no more under the artistic perspective but under the financial one... desiring for more and more money. So, this was the reason he left and it seems his new band is prosperous day by day. Right in this period he is about to release the second album. I know you only had a diplomatic attitude so far giving in only general info, yet I really would like to know what your point of you is. Is he right? We still shouldn't forget Morten was one of the most trustable members of the band who meant a great big deal since TRISTANIA was founded, eight years ago.

"The reasons why the remaining members of TRISTANIA came to such situation like Morten's departure...are connected to the fact that his departure had to do with social and musical differences between us that became too big. As you said, we chose to have a diplomatic attitude in the press when we released 'World of Glass' and we only gave the general info. I still think that it only would be pathetic of me to go into details on these things in the press. However, I have to say that to insinuate that money ever has been a motivation behind the line-up changes is far from the reality. The important thing for TRISTANIA has always been the music, and it still is. Money has never been and never will be an important issue when it comes to our reasons for doing this. What I love about TRISTANIA is that we have always been independent when it comes to our music. On all our albums we have composed the music... like ourselves, and we don't listen what other people say. I guess if we had been into this for the money we would not have released the music that we do."

Except Morten, the line up remained basically unchanged, which is almost unbelievable for a Metal band. Moreover, you added other two musicians/vocals in a complete formula and one of them is an old faithful collaborator... and I make reference to Osten, of course. Tell me, how did it happen? Do the other members accept with no sign of reluctance whatever you and Einar decide? Don't they have a strong individuality or character either to oppose resistance or to stand their point of view... or the explanation might be that you are rather too democratic so that they would feel ok and really comfortable in



any circumstance you create?

"All decisions in TRISTANIA are being made by the seven members in common. When it comes to Østen, the whole band wanted to have him as a regular member. He has done clean vocals on all our albums as a guest singer, and over the years he has become more and more important for the band. With 'World of Glass' he also was the main lyricist, so it was a natural thing that he became a member of the band. He joined the band together with Kjetil before the World of Glass Tour in Europe in 2001."

Well, Osten is the eldest of you all and in the same time the newest in the band, officially speaking. THE MORENDOES is a band who acts for many years now and yet had neither the success nor the chance you or THEATRE OF TRAGEDY had so far. Do you have any idea why? Osten's clean voice simply gives a certain charm to TRISTANIA's sound. And I must say that now even the lyrics sound more serious and profound, practically somehow out of the usual Gothic patterns… they seem to be more modern…

"It's not always easy to explain things like that. There are a lot of good bands that deserves to be signed, but who never get through the demo-stage. There can be various reasons for that, but one explanation can be that some labels don't always go after the artistic qualities. Sometimes you get the impression that companies are more interested in trends and what music sells at a given time. Morendoes was a very good band and it would have deserved bigger success. Unfortunately, the band has ceased to exist, but the former members are still working with new bands and projects. I totally agree with what you say about Østen's lyrics on 'World of Glass'. He writes more mature and personal lyrics than Morten did. I think the lyrics on 'World of Glass' have got more substance than on our previous albums. Our lyrical intention with that album was to avoid the typical Gothic patterns, as you mentioned."

Kjetil comes from a band with a different orientation, BLINDFOLDED. He participated not at the recordings of the last album but it seemed he had proved to be a good vocalist when TRISTANIA performed live. I actually had the proof myself for such when I was in Budapest at one of your concerts. Still, isn't he rather too aggressive? Was your intention solely to replace Morten's voice or did you have anything else in your mind? On your last album, Ronny's voice (TRAIL OF TEARS) was excellent… during live performance, Kjetil, who is even smaller in height seem to "eat" the microphone… pretty nervous and really really… evil… he, he, he

"Kjetil became a member of the band because he has the kind of voice we wanted. As you say he is pretty small, but he as an extremely powerful voice. We didn't only want a replacement for Morten's vocals, but we wanted a singer with character and identity in his voice, and we got that with Kjetil. He did a very good job on the World of Glass Tour, and his voice works very well on the new material as well. The upcoming album will be his first recordings with TRISTANIA, and I feel that his vocals are perfect for our sound."

TRISTANIA counts on vocals in a great measure so that, besides Kjetil and Osten, Jan Kenneth Barkved (ex-THE MORENDOES, ELUSIVE) has taken a big role as well proving to be a reliable and stable collaborator. I noticed he collaborated as well with SIRENIA. What do you actually think about him and what chances are for him to join your band any longer?

"Jan Kenneth has a really powerful voice, and he is very talented. Personally I think his best appearance with TRISTANIA was on the song 'Heretique' from the 'Beyond the Veil' album. That track is the only TRISTANIA song where he has done the lead vocals. On 'World of Glass' he only did single parts. On the upcoming release I think Østen will be the only one who will be doing the clean male vocals. Østen has a very diverse voice, and I think that he hasn't yet got the chance to show his whole spectre with TRISTANIA yet. I guess people will discover new sides of Østen's voice on the new one."

Kenneth Olsson was a bass player in UZI SUICIDE, besides Morten and Einar back in 1996. He joined the new band right away and since then he performs the drums. What can you tell me about him? What kind of person is he? Even more, he started to play with Morten long time before that, back in 1992, which means they were good friends. How come he didn't leave TRISTANIA as well?

"Morten left the band because the remaining members felt that this was the only right thing to happen. After the departure the rest of us were eager to go on and we focused on the composing for 'World of Glass'. Today the band works better than ever – both musically and socially. Kenneth was not the bass player, but the drummer in Uzi as well. He's a great guy and a very talented drummer. On the new album he got involved in the creative process on an early stage. I think his biggest advantage as a drummer is his skills in reading the music, and to play the right things in the right places. My experience is that far from all drummers he can do this. There is a big difference between playing drums and banging them. He is also an extremely reliable drummer in a live situation."

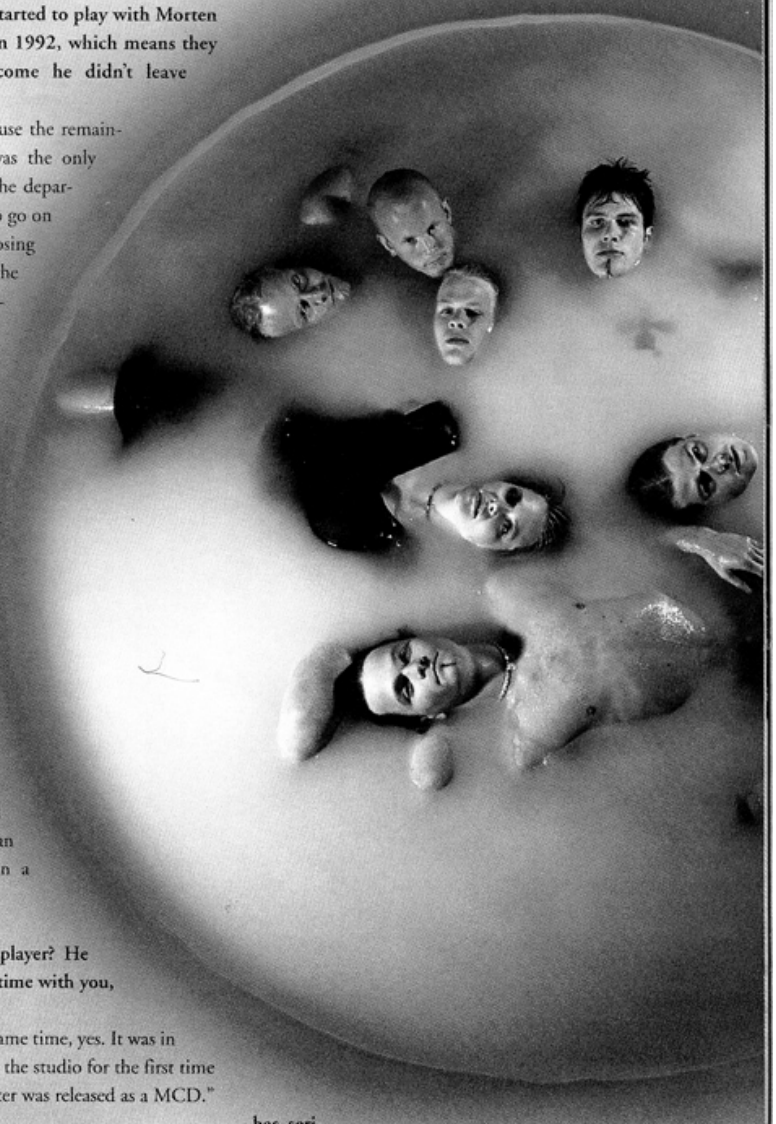
What about Rune, the bass player? He came in the band in the same time with you, right?

"We joined the band at the same time, yes. It was in 1996. In May 1997 we entered the studio for the first time and recorded the demo, that later was released as a MCD."

Einar has always performed the synth part and it seems he really is gifted for such. How do you get along with him and what do you find to have changed in your musical collaboration since Morten's departure? Practically the whole nucleus of command in TRISTANIA's music has been completely disarranged. I understand he has a piano home but he actually didn't try that hard to learn more than what his father taught him…

"The whole composing process works better now than ever. It really wasn't a problem after the line-up changes, because Einar and I had already started to work more and more together on the song-writing. We have been working close together since the first album. We collaborated on 2 songs on the 'Beyond the Veil' album, and when we departed with Morten, the two of us had already most of the songs for 'World of Glass' ready. The biggest difference on the composing process now compared to earlier, is that the whole band is more involved. It's usually for Einar and me to work out the sketches for the songs, but on the new songs we have worked as a band on the material on an early stage in this process. I think this is the biggest strength with the new song material, and it has added more dynamics to our songs."

Vibeke Stene's voice stands for a great impressing "weapon" and in the same time a fundamental feature of TRISTANIA's sound. She became an effective member when you became conscious about what impact her voice produced in the band's sound, which was back in 1997 when you released the demo. Where from did you find her? As far as I know she hadn't pretty much in common with Metal scene. In exchange, she comes from a family of musicians and she has serious musical background and musical studies… canto especially… So, she is a pro, probably the only one in the band with a serious musical background…



"We got in touch with Vibeke through a common friend. In the beginning she was only supposed to help us out with the vocals on the demo we recorded in May 97, but we soon understood that her voice was perfect for our sound, so she joined the band. I think her biggest advantage as a vocalist is her diversity. It would be quite boring if all the female vocal parts would be this opera soprano thing. Especially on 'World of Glass'… Vibeke shows the big diversity in her voice, which makes the whole thing more interesting. Vibeke had no experience with Metal as a singer before she joined TRISTANIA, but she was into a lot of different music styles – Metal included. She is the only member of the band who has taken education in music, and she is talented. I have to add that, to me, music in itself is serious, and I have never accepted to draw a line between 'serious' and other music experience. I think that is somewhat constructed."

Another essential element in your sound is Pete Johansen's violin and he got involved in Metal scene

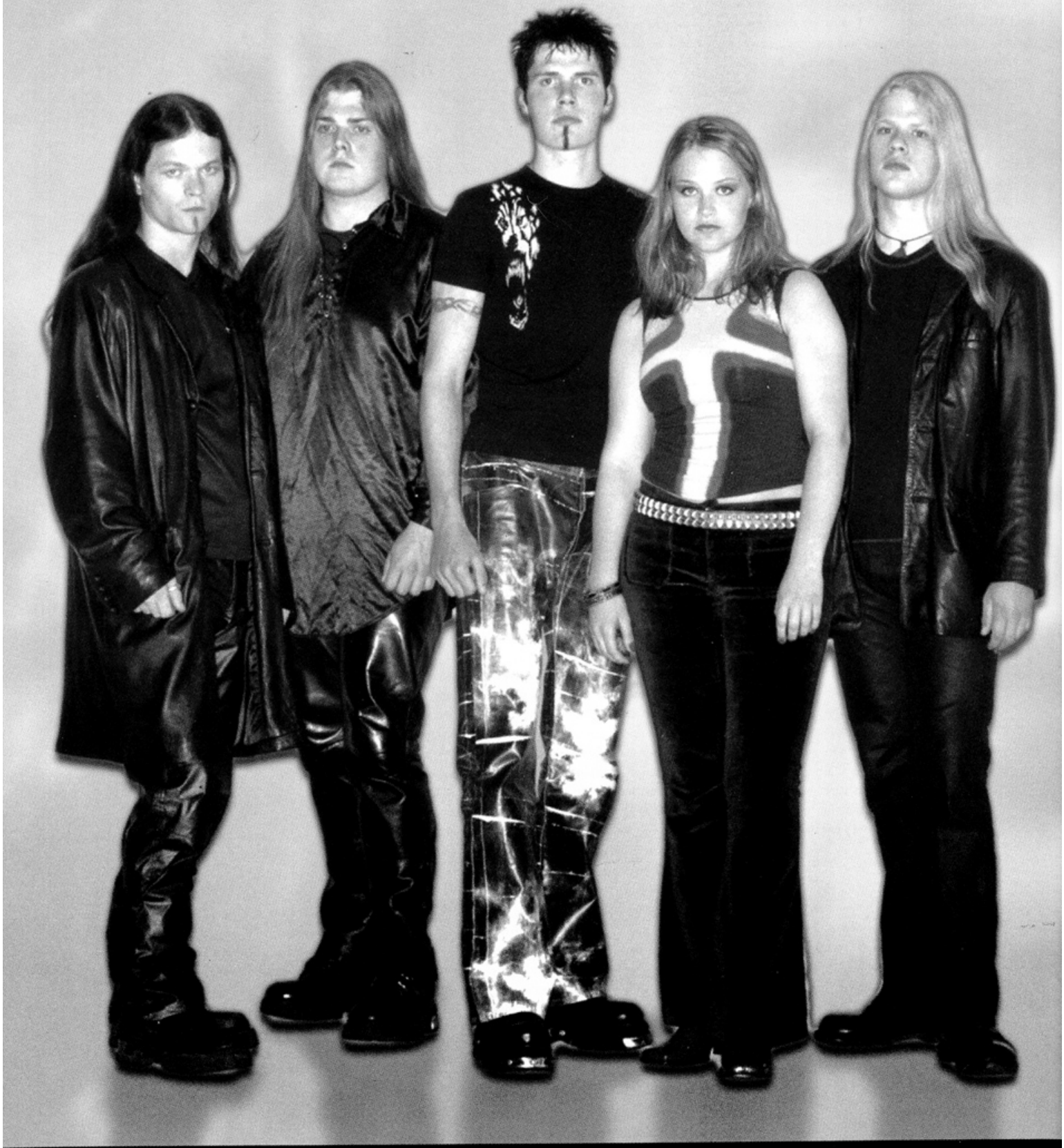
thanks to his friendship with Terje Refsnes (Sound Suite)…. In such light, he worked together with you, TSOTB, MORGUL, SIRENIA… and even founded his own project, THE SCARR…. Where from such partnership with him, who had so little to share in such sonorities especially since he seems to follow rather an Irish sound or classical music…?

"Pete is a very talented musician, he has got a lot of experience and he has got an extreme musicality. He first contributed on the 'Widow's Weeds' album and he has done violins on all our albums."

I understood he really got mad recently about the entire Metal scene declaring he was indeed disgusted by some labels' politics such as Napalm, Massacre or Season Of Mist and he wouldn't collaborate with any other Metal band in the near future. This means that with you neither. In fact, what happened? Does it have any connection with the concert in Vienna… beside Sirenia? I really wonder how TRISTANIA would sound without Pete's violin…

"It's been a while since I talked with Pete. But last time I talked to him I got the impression that this was his point of view. He was fed up with the whole Metal industry, and I don't think that he is very eager to contribute on metal releases in the nearest future. This is not a problem for us, since we have had plans to record the next album without violins in any way. The violins were a less important element on 'World of Glass' compared to our first two releases, and we don't feel that the new song material will 'need' violins. This has something to do with the structure of the new songs in general. They are more direct, 'in the face', and we will use less elements than we have done on our albums so far. We are planning to use a cello on a couple of tracks on the new one, though."

When you signed with Napalm, you were only 17! I do know you actually didn't follow any musical classes/courses… but I find absolutely amazing to reach the age of 25 and to be an essential member in a band… this is simply outstanding! Should we talk about luck-fortune or there is more than that? I wouldn't count hard working on this list as there are many who work hard and never come to achieve such… so… probably there is about inspiration… gift…



"I think there are a number of reasons why we got success at a very young age. We have definitely worked hard since we started to work serious with TRISTANIA in 1996, but, as you say; hard work itself is not enough. For me personally it was kind of coincidence that I joined TRISTANIA in the first place. I went to college on Tau, outside of Stavanger. There I met the other guys in the band. When we got to know each other, we understood that we were into the same kind of music, and we shared visions on what we wanted to do musically ourselves."

Or maybe a possible explanation is that you are from Norway, the country where, a few years ago, Black Metal made itself known for the large public throughout rebel and violent acts, which had nothing to do with music (crimes, suicides, setting churches on fire… etc… how do you see those acts? What do you think about such?) Do you still listen to BURZUM or EMPEROR? What do you think about actual Black Metal?

"There used to be a lot of fuzz about all these things that didn't have anything to do with the music. I'm happy that today it seems that the focus is back where it should be; on the music. I have never liked any Burzum albums; I think it is boring music. But Emperor was a fantastic band. Probably the most sophisticated black metal band and they had their own sound that they developed through their different albums."

Napalm represented a serious reasonable offer and those three albums plus the other two MCDs did benefit of a real and sustained promotion, which reflected in the sales as well. How many TRISTANIA copies have been sold out so far and which album recorded the biggest sales of all?

"To be honest I don't know our sale-numbers in detail, but I know that 'Beyond The Veil' and 'World of Glass' have sold pretty much the same. Like any band, we want to sell as much albums as possible. But you can't think about this when you are creating music. I guess it's all about being true to oneself, and make the music that feels natural. We have never been concerned with genres and music styles; we leave that to the press."

Can you live exclusively from TRISTANIA's music? Have you gained lots of money on behalf of music? A way or another, you cannot deny you actually are the "star" of melancholic Metal Gothic scene…

"Unfortunately we are not able to live from the work with TRISTANIA. You don't get rich from doing what we are… All of us are either studying or working beside of the band. I would love to be able to live from TRISTANIA, but it's not possible at the moment."

You sustained dozens concerts, gigs… in various corners of the world such as North America or South America. What memories do you have from those places? Any funny memories? Which was the most successful live performance you ever had?

"I really love touring. It's a fantastic thing to have the opportunity to play for dedicated fans from all over the world. It's a very challenging thing to be on a stage and play your own music. It's a communication thing with the fans and that makes it so special. We work a lot with the live part, and we always try to become a better live band. I have a lot of good memories from tour, both on and off stage. We always have good fun when we are on tour and we have a lot of good memories from partying on the night-liner etc. I guess the most memorable memories we have from our concerts are from our shows in Latin America. The fans we have there are really dedicated, and it's a very intense feeling to play for a crazy crowd like that. We also have good memories from the big festivals – for instance Wacken in 99. We had not very much experience with playing live for bigger audiences back then, and I remember it was an insane feeling to play for over 10 000 people. Touring with Tiamat and Anathema in 1999 was also a special thing. I have been a big fan of both of these bands, and it was a great to tour with them."

I think, if I am not mistaken, you had a flight of 15 hours to America in order to play for 25 minutes. Stupid ironic fact… right?

"Yes, it's almost true. I think we played for 35 minutes, so it was pretty strange. It sounds like Spinal Tap…. hehe. We were supposed to play for about an hour I think, but we had to cut our set because the organizers were not able to keep the time schedule. Actually the whole festival was very strange…"

It is pretty difficult to see the real face of TRISTANIA live… that is why I find it a real act of treason (it is a tough word but true) to perform play back in front of so many fans. Well, it is true… some times there are no other solutions at your hand… How do you see this thorny issue?

"We always do all that we can play on stage ourselves, and we would never use samples on things that we can do ourselves. But when you do have so many elements that we use in some of our songs, it's impossible to avoid samples. We cannot afford to bring a big choir on tour, for instance. So if a song is based around the choirs we need samples to do it live. It is a good solution, but personally I think that some songs get less dynamics when you do it like this, and Kenneth has to play with click track. This is why I think that some of the new songs will work very well live. There will be fewer elements, and fewer choirs. I think we will play most of the new songs without click track for the drummer, and this way we can get a more dynamic sound."

One of your inspiration-bands was TOT. What can you tell me about their musical line? Other bands to mark your musical evolution were MY DYING BRIDE or ANATHEMA. Do you still listen to those bands even in the actual terms of change?

"Theatre of Tragedy is a good band. Personally I prefer their first albums, and I guess 'Aegis' is my favourite. I'm still huge fan of both Anathema and My Dying Bride. I have followed both of these bands since their debuts in the early 90's and it's still a big thing for me when they release new albums."

Returning to TRISTANIA's music, I can say that all three albums are very different one from each other yet having in common the same unique sound…characteristic to TRISTANIA! From Gothic, Black or Doom Atmospheric Metal shapes and phases you came at the point of reaching Electronic or Industrial touches. In the same picture we can talk about the choral elements and Einar is a real maestro in this field. You have asked for the help of many other collaborators in these choirs, even Vibeke's relatives (it is true not on the last album…) Will we listen to such insertions on the future album?

"I am proud of the band's evolution. As you say, we have released three quite different albums, but each of them still sounds like TRISTANIA. It has been a natural development the whole time, and this will continue in the future. The new songs are somewhat simpler than much of what we have done earlier, with fewer elements. As I've said there will be fewer choirs in the future. I really feel that we have used this so much, and now more and more bands use it…."

A propos, what can you tell me about the new sound, the new album… new tracks…? What should we expect?

"As mentioned above the new songs will be simpler, sounding more direct. We have worked a lot on the dynamics in the arrangements, and we want to focus on the essential elements on the different songs. Some of the new songs are really heavy, and some are softer. What they all have in common is that we are stripping the whole thing a little bit down. There will be less electronic elements than on 'World of Glass' and I think the next one will have a very organic sound."

Have you signed with a label already? Should I understand that Napalm didn't extent the contract? Well, nevertheless, Napalm is the engine which made you famous all over the world… and you had the main attention there… top-priority, the biggest budget… any surprise-collaborators?

"We have not signed with any label yet. There are different labels that are interested in us, and we will make the final decision on which record company we want to work with in the future very soon. Napalm is one of the interested labels. There will always be things that the band is not happy about with a label I think, but all in all we are happy with the job Napalm Records has done for us. They have done a good promo job, as you mentioned."

TRISTANIA name makes reference to sadness…, melancholy and deep sorrow. TRISTANIA's music seems to be just in the same frequency. But I must say that the last album encloses as well a romantic dimension pointed out in a delightful contrasting manner and shape. Tell me, what would make the new album to be different from the previous one? What would make it different from the other albums?

"'World of Glass' is probably our most diverse release until now, and I think the next one also will be a very diverse one. I think that there will be a stronger link between the different songs on the new one, though."

Will we enjoy many other cover versions? The Seigmen one, from the last album was a superb cover version… Did you really like this band? What about the new orientation of the band who was re-founded under the name of ZEROMANCER? Aren't they rather too commercial?

"We have thought about at least recording one or two cover versions in the forthcoming studio sessions. I guess we will await the result before we consider putting them on the album. We have quite a few different songs in mind that we are thinking of. It's also possible that we will include one or two covers in our live set on the future tours. One of the cover songs that we have done lately on rehearsals is 'Exit Music' by Radiohead as a duet with Østen and Vibeke. It's always fun to cover other artist's songs and to add your personal touch to it. Maybe we will include that one in a concert some time. I think Seigmen is amongst the best Norwegian bands during the nineties. During the years they existed they created and developed their own sound that was unique. My favourite Seigmen albums are 'Total' and 'Radiowaves'. Both of them are fantastic. I am huge fan of the first Zeromancer album, 'Clone Your Lover'. The two next ones don't appeal that much to me personally, but they are a very good band."

Could we see any relation between the name of the band and Tristan & Isolda? Or perhaps with Wagner's opus?

"No."

Who are the band's members in everyday life? How do they earn their existence? How does it go a regular day of their life? Do they have children, families… responsibilities of such?

"Einar, Østen, Kenneth & Rune all have jobs beside of the band. Vibeke and Kjetil are studying. I am normally studying myself, but right now I am doing my civil service (as an alternative to military service). I'm doing the civil service working at a rock venue, though, so it quite nice. None of us has children."

I understood you really loved the last SOLEFALD… what

other albums made a strong impression on you? What do you think of SIRENIA? What about TRAIL OF TEARS?

"Radiohead's 'Hail To The Thief' and Solefald 'In Harmonia Universali' were the two albums that were most important for me in 2003. Both of them represent original and innovative music in different ways. Other highlights for me during 2003 were Madder Mortem's 'Deadlands', Massive Attack's '100th Window' and 'Reality' by David Bowie. Now I'm really looking forward to the new My Dying Bride. I have always been a huge fan of that band. To be honest, I have only listened to Sirenia's album a couple of times. Morten is without doubt a talented composer and musician, but the songs on the album sound too much the same in my opinion. Trial of Tears is also a very talented band. The reason why we asked Ronny Thorsen to do the extreme vocals on 'World of Glass' was because we really liked his voice and we are looking forward to their future release."

Otherwise, David Bowie is one of your essential vocal approaches and your favourite one, besides Fields Of The Nephilim, The Cure or Depeche Mode. Aren't you tempted to found a project to follow a similar direction?

"The best thing about TRISTANIA for me is our diversity. We are influenced by all kinds of different music. Though we are a metal band, we are influenced by many things that are far from metal. For example, David Bowie is a big influence for me when it comes to composing."

In TRISTANIA's sound there are to be distinguished some elements of classical music. Is any of you a fan of such category? I heard you used to listen to Wagner's compositions....

"Like I've said, I like all kinds of music. I also enjoy classical music to a certain degree, though I'm not listening to it very often. I like some of Wagner's work for example, yes. It's probably Einar and Vibeke that have been listening most to classical music of the TRISTANIA members."

The Metal scene is full of bands who try to copy your style and your sound, which is labelled as a Gothic sound. Maybe it is not the most appropriate labelling but I don't have in mind other term either. Still, what would be your advice for these bands? To quit music? Or to follow up an even more commercial manner?

"What happened in the end of the 90's was that labels opened their eyes for these kinds of bands. They saw that there was money to make upon these bands, and the result became a gothic boom. This led to that a lot of bands like this got signed, including a lot of bad ones, in my opinion. The essential thing in every genre is identity and originality, and too many bands are just copies of others. I don't want to give advice to other bands, though."

Any news about TSOTB? They started so good and promising...

"It's been a while since I spoke to any of them. Although we come from the same area of Norway, we live in different cities. But the last time I met them, they were planning a new album."

Which are your sources of inspiration? The fact you live in the North part of Europe has any meaning or significance or effect towards your music? What about the Viking issue? History, mythology, geography... they all have an impact in TRISTANIA's music?

"I think it's difficult to put words on the sources of inspiration, because I believe that a big part of these processes works on a sub-conscious level. When it comes to me and Einar as composers we can get inspiration from all kinds of things. Good music can be an inspiration. People you meet, a movie or a book.... you name it. I think Østen as a lyricist feels it the same way. When it comes to nature, geography etc. it's difficult to tell if (or how much) this has impact on or work. It might have on a sub-conscious level."

Which is your opinion next to terrorist acts of Saddam, Osama Bin Laden or next to what happens in Palestine? If I am not mistaken you formulated some points of view in "Wormwood", which were initially supposed to act under a different title, "The Sins of George"... Are you interested in politics?

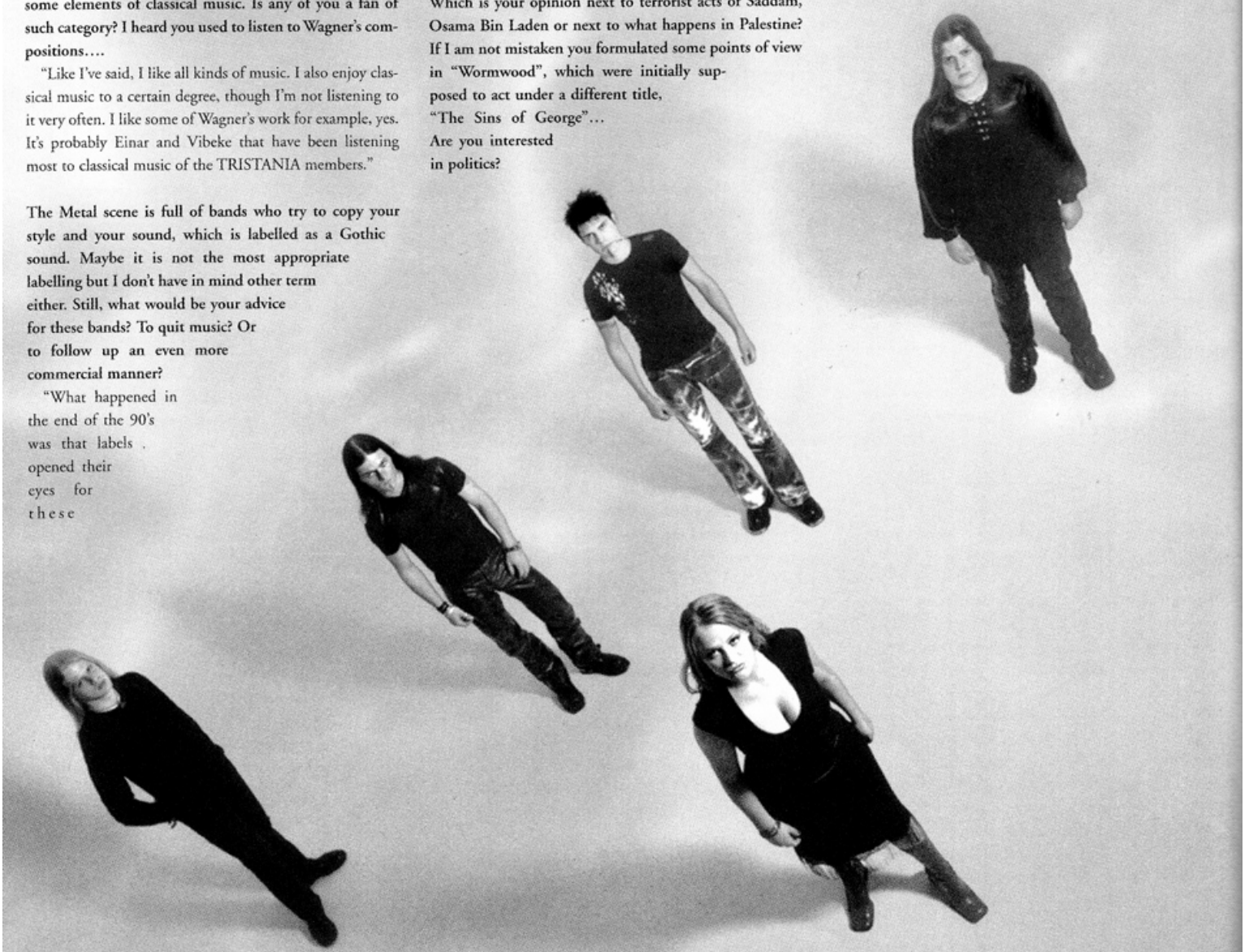
"He, he... The song was never supposed to be called 'The Sins of George". It was Østen's humoristic working title on the lyrics. There are elements on both 'Wormwood' and other songs on 'World Of Glass' that relate to the situation in the world today. The title for the album is in itself a metaphor on what's going on. TRISTANIA will never be a political band, though. Personally I'm interested in politics, and I'm really worried about what is going on."

What about religion? A formal answer "we have no religion" type... might be an answer and would clear some issues out but it wouldn't be enough for your fans... therefore... would you be kind to comment a little the idea of religion and its implications...?

"I define myself as an atheist, and the essence of that is that I do not see any reason why there should be a god or other forces that control this world. So I guess I have to disappoint you on this one. I have no religion. I believe in humans, not other forces. I think it is pretty frightening to see today what is happening. Religion is the reason behind all the big conflicts that are going on around the planet. I hate fundamentalism of any kind, and I think Bush' approach to deal with terrorism very wrong, and it only escalates terrorism."

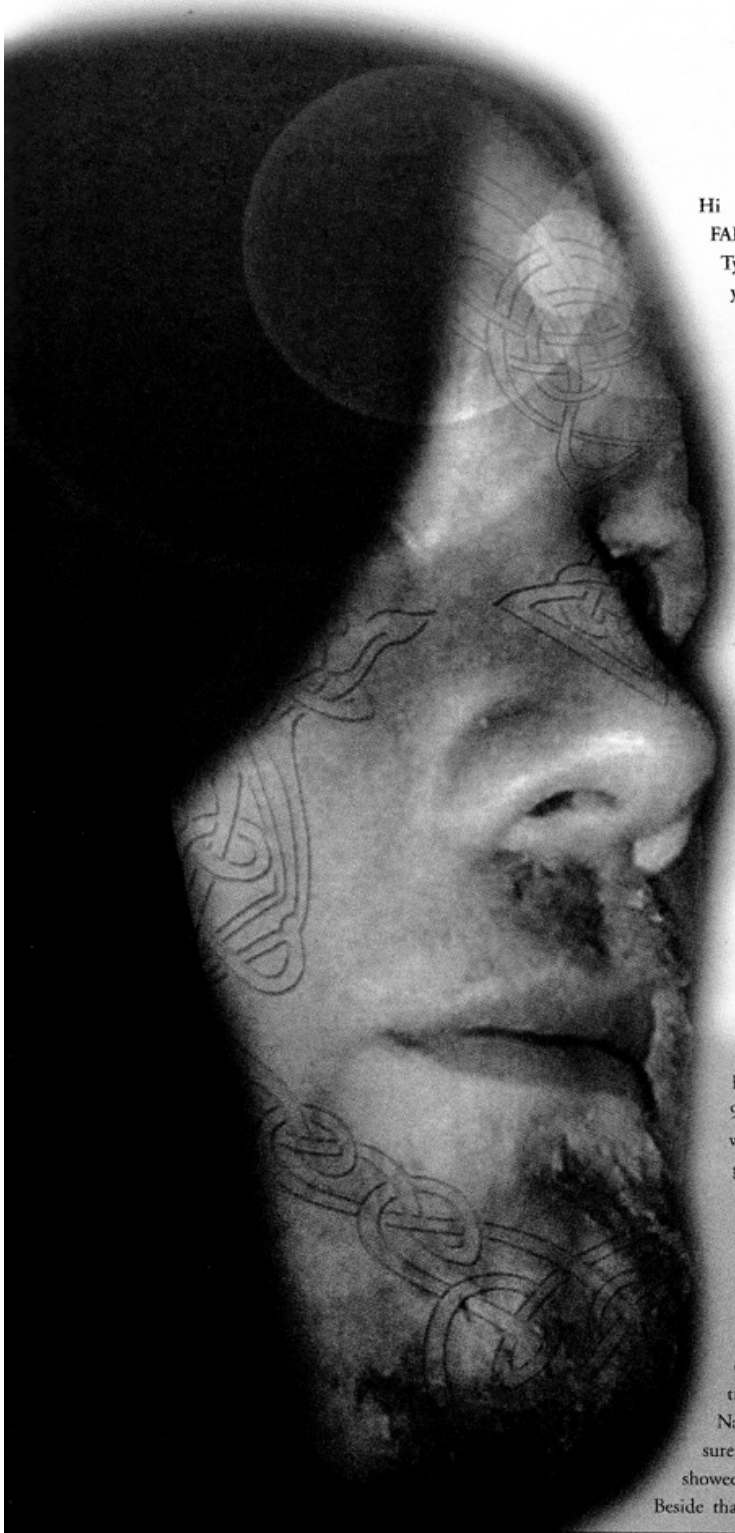
Thanks for the interview, Anders, and good luck!

February, 2004



Falkenbach

This legendary project has released an exquisite album at the end of 2003, even if it actually came after 6 years of "silence". Vratyas, the mysterious character, has decided to answer a couple of nice decent questions but I must tell you that I succeeded not in finding out his real name, not even in the end! Well, he is the one who, during almost 15 years, had come up with the famous FALKENBACH and SKALDIC ART label. Perhaps not exactly a success as far as the real name is concerned but otherwise... this is a nice intriguing material and I assure you there is much interesting information you will enjoy by reading the following!



Hi Vratyas! Finally, the new FALKENBACH album "Ok Nefna Tysvar Ty" was released after six years of silence. I know that in the meantime you had created enough songs for 2-3 albums. Why did you wait till now and what did you do with the rest of materials? Are you satisfied with the sound, the promotion, and the feedback?

"There were several reasons. On one hand I've been rather busy with building up my own label Skaldic Art Prod. On the other hand personal reasons which I do not want to explain more detailed. Of course a lot of people, mainly Napalm told me that such a long period of silence would harm FALKENBACH. To me this was of no importance. To me FALKENBACH was never a business thing, and to me the only aim was to release a new album no earlier than I felt it was the right time to do so. During the last years I got some insights in how this underground business works, and obviously 99% of all people think of money when they talk about music. This goes for labels as well as magazines. I wanted to show that to me FALKENBACH would never be just a way to get money, and if this period of silence leads to lower selling, it's absolutely ok with me. This new album needed its time, and I gave it all the time it needed. Fortunately Napalm did not give me any pressure, and in the end the final result showed me that I did the right thing. Beside that I think people who keep the truth in heart do not forget after just some years... About the promotional work of Napalm I cannot tell you too much, as I do not use to care about such things. But as far as I can say Napalm is doing quite some work for it."

You say it somewhere that the new album is more a step back, back to the roots. Why? Also, on this album you have two very old songs. "Donar" is about 10 years old and was featured on one of the older demos. The song Homeward Shore was taken from the unreleased "Fireblade" album that was recorded about half a year before the debut album "en their medh riki fara". Why did you choose for these songs to fill the new album?

"I always used to work with older material, on all the albums so far. So, this is nothing new for FALKENBACH. In my opinion the new album is more or less a step back in FALKENBACH's history because of the fact that the songs created in the very beginning were more or less pure folk songs, with acoustic guitars, clean vocals, percussions etc. The new album now features quite some aspects of those early days, at least more than the former two official releases."

It's for the first time when you used help of session musicians here: drummer, addition vocal and acoustic guitar of VINDSVAL. I know you are very exact. So, did you ask/require just for their musical skills or the first reason was their characters? Tell about the role of these guys in FALKENBACH.

"I have been looking for a good drummer for years, also for the former albums already. But it is hard to find someone who can offer musical skills as well as a good character. Boltthorn seemed to be the perfect decision to me, and in the end he did a really good job on the new album. Hagalaz added a couple of acoustic parts, Tyrann a few vocal lines. Both were not meant to participate on the recordings, but as they are living at Karlsruhe, where the Tidalwave Studio is placed, they simply visited me, and when we sat there with some beers we had the idea to let them add some parts to the new album. No one of the participated on the song writing process, and they are no constant members of FALKENBACH as well. Still in my opinion they enriched the album a lot, not just because of their musical skills, but also because of their attitude."

Let us refer a little to the album's tracks... the cover (excellent one)... the same logo (why did you prefer to keep the same one?). And the sound is more Epic and Bombastic... A real Nordic Folk Metal...

"What to say about the single tracks... well, the opener is called "Vanadis", a song in the vein of "Heathenpride" or "When Gjallarhorn will sound" in some ways. '...for as long as Winds will blow' is one of the newer songs on this album, not too long after the 2nd album was released this song was created, same goes for 'Aduatuza', though this track is a bit older as far as I can remember. 'Donar's Oak' was taken from one of the older demos, and this makes this song to be the oldest on the album. 'Homeward Shore' was taken from the unreleased 'Fireblade' album, and 'Farewell'

is also a rather new track, released in between the 2nd and the new album. The cover was created by an artist more than 100 years ago, so obviously not for FALKENBACH exclusively. The logo is still the first original one, once created by myself with the artistic help of Christophe Szpajdel. He did a fantastic job with this logo, in my opinion one of his best works ever. To me there is no reason to change the logo, though some business aspects may promise some advantage from changing the logo, like so many bands did during the last years. This logo is a part of FALKENBACH and will not be changed I guess. The sound became a really good one, due to the outstanding work of Mr. Damiani at Tidalwave Studio."

The title of the new album is a quotation taken from the Edda, a part that describes how to handle runes and what for to be used. What does Edda represent for you? And, speak about the way it influences your existence, please!

"To me the Edda consists of truth, and also of Christian aspects on the other hand. One has to handle the Edda carefully… to realize which parts to trust, and how to understand the other ones. It is one of the sources, but not the only one, though many people seem to think that way. It's a part of the whole, no more and no less."

For you the lyrics are even more important than the music. Without the lyrics there was no message behind the songs, the message behind it is the only reason why FALKENBACH exists. So, what is THE message that your music gives to the humanity?

"I think everyone should make up his own mind about the lyrics. I am not the pope, and therefore I will not tell anyone what to think about the lyrics of FALKENBACH. Who ever wants to read them should just have a look at the booklets of the CDs /LPs. Sometimes the way itself is the point you want to arrive at. To tell someone the meaning of the lyrics often means to kill the meaning itself."

FALKENBACH is not a project that changes masses but it was able during the years to give some impulses to some people. Which are the effects discharged by your music and in what way do you think it might have influenced peoples?

"This is a hard question. I am not sure what FALKENBACH was able to give people out there. Maybe it gave an impulse to some to think about some aspects different, maybe it gave them strength."

Most of the lyrics refer to Edda and the hyperborean lore called Vatan. The same goes for the visual artwork of the booklet. Especially the last page shows all important aspects of Vatan, it's a kind of a guidepost through all rites and possible experiences of a human soul. Also, I know you are heathen/pagan. What represent Vatan/Asatru for you?

"As I said already earlier before, this kind of knowledge is a part of myself, as it has been a part of my education."

A lot of people do not know about the differences between northern and western Germanic aspects. They think FALKENBACH was about Scandinavian mythology, and this is only one single part. FALKENBACH is Germanic and this means much more. Can you tell us more about this story?

"There is not too much to tell you about it. In fact there are things that Northern and Western Germanic mythology have in common, but there are other aspects as well that are quite different. FALKENBACH describes a lot of aspects of Western and Northern Germanic traditions, cultures and traditions, beliefs, values, life in general. It is sad to see that there are rarely persons who are able to hold distinct views of these two cultures."

'When the stuff of myth and fantasy become our proper study of man, however, the range of our investigations expands enormously. Industrial statistics are the language of the present; myth is the language of the ages.' (Theodore Roszak – 'The Making of a Counter-Culture'). What is your opinion about that?

"It depends on how you handle mythology. It has got the potential to give you very much, but to others it worth of mythology today, though it has a great importance seems to be nothing more than fairytales. Superficiality is the language of our time, and this affects the potential as I said already."

FALKENBACH has 15 years of existence. I know you wish to celebrate that by re-recording those 9 demo tapes under good conditions, but something like that in limited edition. What feed-back did you get from Napalm?

"At the moment I do not feel like doing a big celebration. Maybe something special will be done, a small gig, or something recorded in limited edition. We will see."

Skaldic Art is a non profit project, means all the money you earn with it… is reinvested in the bands. It's your label much more like a family than a record label? Which are the bands you wish to have under your label? I know you had a close relationship with FURTHEST SHORE guy, who moved from Finland in Germany a few years ago…. A great friend of mine, too…

"All the guys signed to Skaldic Art know each other and are in constant contact. We decide everything together, we visit each other quite often, and to call it a family is much more the truth than to call it a label in fact. Skaldic Art just wants to offer the maximum of artistic freedom to the bands, and this leads to outstanding results."

Can you describe every band from your label and the reason of signing with them? You also fired some of them. Why?

"The first release of Skaldic Art was FURTHEST SHORE. This band in my opinion managed to create one of the most outstanding Epic Metal albums ever! They came up with a demo containing a really bad sound, and this one was meant to be the final result. I offered them to re-record the whole songs under good conditions, on my own costs, as I had 100% confidence in their skills. And they proved me right. Unfortunately Teemu decided to put Furthest Shore on ice for the moment. I hope he will continue one day. OBSIDIAN GATE released its debut album along with FURTHEST SHORE via Skaldic Art: a band with a maximum of musical skills in fact, somewhere in between Limbonic Art and other orchestral music. I liked the mixture of classical parts and raw black metal a lot. Same goes for their 2nd output, which was released later on. After that we decided to stop out cooperation due to several reasons I do not want to comment further. RIVENDELL created a great demo, and after some discussions we agreed about cooperation on long terms. Sometimes RIVENDELL reminds me on older FALKENBACH demo-material, so it is obvious why I like this style that much I guess. Falagar is without any doubts an artist with big potential, and I try to support this as good as possible. VINDSVAL also offered a superb demo, which was meant to be released as their debut album. We agreed about changes of the artwork, and the album received very good critics. Above all the new album is going to be one of the best albums ever, as I had the chance to listen to a pre-production already. This takes a lot of time, and that is what I give them, as I know about the quality of what is to come. ORDO DRACONIS came up with a self produced Mini-CD, which was released by the band itself already, but distributed by Skaldic Art as well afterwards. Their debut full length album turned out to be rather complex and of high quality, an album that asks for several listens. Whenever I listen to it, I find new aspects of the songs, something a band rarely is able to create. Now we agreed to stop our cooperation. Nevertheless we are still very good friends and in constant contact. German Pagan Metal band MENHIR was signed quite a while ago, and their best album so far 'Ziuwari' was released via Skaldic Art. Due to several reasons we agreed to not continue our cooperation."

What is the right attitude about art and the definition of art in your opinion? I know you gave to the bands the freedom to decide what should happen' regarding the promotion, advertisements and so on without too many compromises in the end. Isn't dangerous for label?

"It is dangerous, no doubts about this. Some were not able to handle this kind of freedom. Whenever you are free to act the way you want, you are always responsible for those who are working with you. If you ask for a lot of money for the studio, you have to keep in mind that there has to be money for the band that is going to record its album next. Egoism is something that destroys a project like Skaldic Art. Everyone has to work with full strength, not only for the own recording, but also for other bands."

In your opinion everyone should feel free to check out songs on the Internet, and even should download full albums. But - as soon as someone really likes an album, he/ she should be honest enough to buy this one, to support the band, and to support the label that gives this band the chance to release great art. Do you not feel fear about the direction that will have art music in Internet epoch?

"There are far too many people stealing art from the internet. It is as easy as this: the more people were going to steal albums from the internet, the less good underground bands will be there. Young bands and labels need the support of the people out there, without it sooner or later only business and commerce will be left."

In past time you added a few clean vocal lines to an album of Ad Inferna. How was the collaboration with this band and which was the reason of doing that? Do you keep the contact with Orias?

"Well, in fact I did not participate on their album, means I did not add anything. They recorded a FALKENBACH cover songs, that's it, but without my help."

What can you tell us about VANADIS, the project with Marcus from Obsidian Gate?

"There is no such project with Marco from OBSIDIAN GATE. We had some ideas, but never realized it. Meanwhile I am not in touch with this guy anymore."

CRIMSON GATES was a band that existed during '91-'94, with two demos released, and two gigs played, in vein of VENOM, old BATHORY, POSSESSED, CELTIC FROST or even MASTERS HAMMER. I now you still have good contacts with the rest of the band. Isn't any serious chance to make a reunion and to put all materials into a CD? Can you speak a little about that?

"As you mentioned already, we all are still in constant contact, having a couple of meeting a year and so on. Whenever we have a few beers too much, we are thinking about some sort of reunion. But on the other hand our keyboard player and the bass player did not participate in any other band in the meantime, means more than 10 years of musical inactivity. The drummer did some session jobs as far as I know and actually is going to build up a new project. I think CRIMSON GATE should remain what it has been during all those years, a nice remembrance. It's been a very nice time, something I would not like to miss. But there are no plans to re-record the old tracks actually."

Everybody knows that you don't like to play gigs. But you don't exclude probably to make sooner or later 1-2 small gigs, somewhere in your hometown, without big promotion, in a small venue and with limited number of tickets.



Can you tell us more about that?

"You are right, some plans exist to play 1-2 live shows. It is not sure yet, but I really wanted to give back something to all those who supported FALKENBACH throughout all those years, and who constantly asked me to play live. Those 1-2 gigs would not take place for promotional reasons, without advertisements by me etc. I want to give something back, no more and no less. I cannot tell you much more about it right now, as I do not even know if it really was to happen. The new line-up rehearsed for the first time at the end of 2003. It turned out to be quite ok, but there are still aspects that had to be improved and discussed with the guest musicians."

You spent your childhood in Iceland ... What represents Iceland for you? I remember the first promo-tape I have received from No Color many years ago and they informed about a great Iceland solo project... After then, you moved in Germany...

"No comments about this one. There are far too many rumors, and no matter what I am saying, people continue to spread weird things. That is why I decided to simply shut up about such topics, hope you understand..."

Why do you 'hide' yourself from other people? It's true, music and lyrics make persons important, not reverse, and the result is much important that the person behind that, but are you sure that can be answered all questions related to the music and lyrics just listening the music and reading the lyrics?

"The music and the lyrics are the only aspects people should care about. In my opinion such person related cult belongs to pop music. I am the one in the background, FALKENBACH counts, and all it stands for, not me. I do not think to hide myself anyway; I simply think my everyday life and my character are of no importance related to FALKENBACH. It is always sad to see how much people care about unimportant aspects, and how superficially they treat important aspect."

And about your image, your photo... Everything is hidden... You used only two photos in the years. Why?

"It is due to the same reasons. I think a photo of me is simply of no importance. Now two photos were released, showing myself on behalf of FALKENBACH. I hope this will be enough for a long time."

As you say, life is an eternal search, for whatever one feels to search. Did you find what you were looking for? Or the searching is just the reason for keeping your interest alive?

"Whenever you found what you were searching for, you would realize that there were more or new aspects you will long for. If the feeling of longing for something was missing, it could be due to two reasons: either you realized/obtained everything you wanted and there is nothing else for you to long for, what is pretty unrealistic and rarely in my opinion, or you suffer from a psychological sickness like depression etc."

Do you think the universe could influence our life? What do you think about movements, sects and the relation between religion and science?

"I am not a part of any movement or something like that, and I have never been. So I cannot tell you too much about this topic. Personally I prefer to stay for myself with my own values and rules."

Are you married? When you are 30 years old, life could be a real challenge... Don't you think it must be the proper time for you to grow a family and raise children?

"I am not married and fortunately I never have been married until now. Maybe one day I will have children, we will see about that when time is right."

What about your free time? What new hobbies did you lately discover? Football perhaps... or Playboy magazines, he, he...

"My hobbies all have to do with sport more or less, nothing more to say about this."

Normality usually executes on personality because of the routine. Do you think or actually find music as an escape, an oasis of meaningful realms which are considered, for and by some, abnormal? There are other ways to fight routine like drugs, alcohol... what about you?

"To me music conveys a message. This message, and all it stands for, is something that has to be done. I am doing my part for FALKENBACH not for fun or for personal reasons, but because it is of importance and has to be done."

15 years of Metal in your life and of your life! Could you imagine or could you picture a complete view into which you might immortalize the most important and touching moments those 15 years made inside your soul?

"Every single demo I did is worth the same, and same goes for the CDs and LPs. None of them was more important than another one. FALKENBACH did not change attitude wise, and will never change in that way. CRIMSON GATE has been a nice period in fact, but also with bad moments. The most touching moments are probably those when a new song is finished, the new ones always move me most."

My friend, that's all. Thanks for your time and I wish you all the best! One final question: why did you use the nickname? What is your real name?

"Thanx for your support!"

January, 2004

Raison d'être



This is another interview for which I decided not to be the only one who asks questions. Thus I asked my friend, Lus/TRONUL ASCUNS/ WIDE OPEN WINGS to help me in this discussion as he is a real supporter of Peter's music. Before getting to the very discussion we desired to bring for you, let's see who Peter Andersson is: born on 20th of March 1973, in Boxholm, he followed flute lessons since the age of 7 and after four years he began studying acoustic guitar; in 1995 he started to play electric bass guitar in a Rock band. Since not that much of what he studied so far actually meant a thing, he gave up all in the favor of synth. He founded his most important band in 1991 and, thanks to collaboration with Roger Karmanik (who had just moved in Mjolby), he actually became one of the fundamental pillars for Dark Ambient Industrial scene. He lives now in Norrkoping; he is a student in the fourth year and the rest will be revealed in the following...

RAISON D'ETRE, Stratvm Terror, Necrophorus, Atomine Elektrine, Panzar, Bocksholm, Svasti-ayanam, Cataclyst, Grismannen are the musical projects of the one who for more than 10 years stood for the vertebral colon in Industrial-Ambient music and moreover a synonym for the Swedish label, Cold Meat Industry, under which the most representative creations in this field were/are released. The reason we came to this point is the latest achievement in RAISON D'ETRE discography, "Requiem for Abandoned Souls", besides some new releases with other projects namely: Atomine Elektrine – "Binomial Fusion", Grismannen – "Absolute Bajs", Cataclyst – "Monuments of a Rubicund Age". For those who are not familiar either with this dimension or with the character, I must say that in 1992 a promotional tape RASON D'ETRE was released and by that time it really made a huge difference thanks to its originality and to a very innovative sound, very particular and unusual from what Industrial music offered until then.

Starting with that material, Peter's music evolved tremendously with each one he released and actually reached the status of a style "in se".

Peter, inside the universe of your musical creation you've always been solitary (except the cases of BOCKSHOLM, STRATVM TERROR and CATACLYST). Tell me, do you think that throughout the music conceived and elaborated by one man and only one could express his feelings at maximum intensity and in a unique manner? Then, tell me, do you think that when two or more artists meet, the result might become nothing more than a mixture of expressions and emotions since the members might get to a point where to influence and complete each other?

"Collaborations can result in a unique mixture, if the involved people are not too similar in mind, then nothing happens. When certain different ideas meet they may turn out to be very fruitful. But it makes a great demand upon the people involved, to be concentrated and find the characteristics of both their friends and themselves. Making music alone is not necessarily easier but you can put all your energy on yourself, and that gives a greater headroom of freedom."

The first and most powerful feeling a listener of RAISON D'ETRE music gets… is the one of isolation; like an urge to run from crowd and lose oneself into solitude as if it was an escape. And I must say it is not regular solitude, but a sad cold and heartsick mood. Would I be wrong if placing such out of any temporal marks? And, as if it wasn't painful enough, we couldn't speak about loneliness alone but of its contemplation as well. In other words, tell me, could one assume that RAISON D'ETRE is kind of negation of what group music is supposed to be reaching actually the purpose of exploring the feeling of introversion?

"I don't believe in a group constellation if not the people included are based in a similar, high level of mutual understanding. Music is about expression, it derives from the inside of the body and transforms to the outside, and it's quite easy that 5 people make a mess of their music. Being alone, you don't need to compromise with other minds, you only need to compromise with the possibilities of making sounds and structures, and for example when it comes to technical limitations of the instruments or lack of personal skills. Groups have to fight against that sort of limitations too. I may sometimes want to run from the crowd, into isolation, but sometimes I want the other way around, from isolation to crowd. Doing live performances is a good example of that, I don't hide at such places rather I keep great company with the crowd. Live performances are different from composing music. For me, the creation-process needs an introspective level and a big deal of concentration in order to be fulfilled."

'In Sadness, Silence and Solitude' CD 1997 was the first material that really stroke us all, while "In Absence of Light" will always be the best track in Industrial-Ambient field. Do you think one would need a special different perception in order to reach and understand the extreme moods you expressed within your music? Let's be honest, it is about very few who get to listen to and appreciate your music!

"Listeners can only be in their own position, and they will only understand the music from their subjective point of view. Understanding is something personal, nothing can be right or wrong, and it's just a personal experience. Even I don't fully understand my music, but maybe I will someday."

Although your music is, by itself, an approach of isolation, it still is commercialized and promoted. Does it mean that for you it might have as well a value of communication channel or something like this? What is it exactly that you want to put on the air/convey throughout your music to the listener?

"In general I have nothing to transmit; I do music only for myself, as a kind of therapeutic tool adapted for me. If someone wants to release and distribute my music it is fine and I am happy when people all over the world get in touch with me and say that my music is fantastic. If people search for messages or similar in my music they will find it but it is not because I put anything there for them. Listeners find the messages that suit them best."

The next step and one of the most important ones for RAISON D'ETRE is placed in 2000 with "The Empty Hollow Unfolds". Focused on extreme musical events and not precisely on the melodic lines, the material actually puts on run the regular listener of melodic and harmonious Ambient. "The Wasteland" is the track that in point of fact dethrones any other symphony of melancholia, lack of hope or light. It is a masterpiece of sampling and I would like for us to stop here for some questions referring to this concept. First of all, where and how did you record the samples featured on this track? In an interview you said you personally managed the recording of all samples you use in sampling…this is interesting, tell me more, please!

"That's true in a certain degree, not all sounds are sampled as some are based on additive synthesis methods. I spend a big time on finding nice outdoors-environmental sounds or sources that may produce interesting sounds if doing the right thing with it. For 'Wasteland' I used a big bowed metal plate, recorded in my cellar, to make all the rusty metallic sounds. A helicopter sound to make the rumbling base sound and the female choirs are from additive synthesis, while the male choirs are real samples, but they are taken from a choir CD. I then I don't remember exactly how I got the other sounds. Sounds like bells, chimes, metal plates, and some more noisy sounds are mostly recorded in my studio or in my cellar, then processed in the computer and used in a sampler unit."

What can you tell me about the music made up exclusively by sampling, synthesizer and computer, where do you place it? Some of those who use (more or less) traditional/regular instruments don't even want to hear of sampling. Moreover, they consider such music (if agreed on this term!) as distorted and immature if not interpreted by classical instruments. After all, isn't the sampler an instrument as any other one?

"Everything can be turned to an instrument, and personally I don't care about if it's a traditional or new technological instrument or whatever you name. I use the instruments I think can do well for me and the music in the composing process."

Do you agree that modern instruments/tools can edit, execute and preserve atmospheres otherwise inaccessible by classical methods? In fact, aren't the mood and spiritual state all that matters?

"Yes I agree. Modern instruments may be able to create new kind of moods, but classical instruments too are able to do that, if used in an appropriate and innovative way."

I've noticed that most of the titles encompass a certain terminology, especially for the first albums. Can you explain why and where from do they come? Which is the dimension that inspires you to come out with such titles?

"For that album, I don't remember exactly where the titles come from, but I try to carefully name the compositions with the certain mood they create, which of course is a subjective experience."

In lack of lyrics, RAISON D'ETRE titles are carefully chosen in order to describe as accurate as possible the atmosphere of each track. I assume it is a kind of introduction into the landscape of vast and emptiness where the sole company is the "wind of solitude". Don't you think that abundance of symphonic keyboards would suggest even better such feeling or scenery? Why are that incredibly discreet the symphonic pads? Is it because of a need to create an original sound?

"It's all a matter of taste."

The most appropriate or similar sound to the one of RAISON D'ETRE is what NECROPHORUS performs. Tell me why didn't you enclose the NECROPHORUS tracks in RAISON D'ETRE discography as well? Tell me, which is, after all, the difference between them?

"I see a lot of differences between RAISON D'ÊTRE and NECROPHORUS. Maybe some of the tracks from NECROPHORUS could have been suited for RAISON D'ÊTRE, but they are extremely few. The subjects and themes of NECROPHORUS are very different, also the mood and the instrumentation. In General, NECROPHORUS is much softer and synthetic than RAISON D'ÊTRE."

Yet, I must confess, the greatest material coming from the other adjacent musical projects is no other but "Archimetrical Universe" CD 1999- ATOMINE ELEKTRINE. This album brings on, under a different shape, a certain mood of contemplating true dimensions of the ego. The listener becomes an atom amongst/within the cold dark universe, feeling himself so insignificant and forgotten while both dimensions, the outside universe and the inside realm, actually reflect one in each other. I think it is indeed a masterpiece of the sampling. How could it be explained the predilection for the electronic music of '70's? Have you listened to such music in the past? Do you listen to such nowadays?

"I was grown up with the music of TANGERINE DREAM, KLAUS SCHULZE and similar cosmic music. I still enjoy listening to the music, but only their material of the 70's. So, it's kind of natural to make Electronic music inspired by these groups."

What can you tell us about the other projects of yours? Which is the one you are most satisfied and excited about? Which is the one to define you better (excepting RAISON D'ETRE, of course!) or we could talk about a split personality of an intricate character? Isn't there even one part of your personality to be expressed throughout something joyful, serene or pleasant? Stratvm Terror is extremely violent, for example. Did you really need to discharge such emotions?

"The human mind is very complex, and there are a lot of different characters of the personality, I don't favor any of them and I do like all my existing projects the same amount. But RAISON D'ÊTRE is the mother somehow."

Offer me more details about the new albums of PANZAR and BOCKSHOLM, about the collaboration with Lina Baby Doll (DEUTSCH NEPAL)…

"The PANZAR album, 'Human Degeneration', was released by Russian label Ewers Tonkunst. PANZAR is an industrial-noise project of mine, which is somewhat similar to early BRIGHTER DEATH NOW, but with a more modern sound. The album has quite low churning Death Industrial sounds with sick topics and lots of speech samples. The BOCKSHOLM CD 'The Sound of White Cloggs', released my Nato label in US, contains a recording of a live-performance from New York 2002. Lina and I were very drunk on that performance but we managed to do the show without any major mistakes, so this sounds really good for being live (However, we definitely don't remember the last minutes of the show.)"

What about the new Atomine Elektrine, Cataclyst and Grismannen albums?

"Pretty soon there will be a re-release of the ATOMINE ELEKTRINE album 'Elemental Severance' and the CD-R 'Atom Xtension'. These will be released as a double CD package titled 'Binomial Fusion' on the Brazilian label

Essence Music, and will also include some previously unreleased material. A re-issue of the CATACLYST album 'Monuments for a Rubicund Age' is planned on CD for Russian Tantric Harmonies. It will differ a little from the CD-R edition: re-mastered with one re-mixed extra track, and then one track that is slightly shortened. Another Russian label, ZHELEZOBETON, will be releasing GRISMANNEN 'Absolute Bajs' double CD-R, which is some kind of complete GRISMANNEN and includes all tracks made during a ten year period."

Your various projects' materials are released in few copies, an aspect I won't comment, but if you feel like, please do! Yet, my questions is: what is your opinion/position next to all those sharing software via internet thanks to which many people get (actually share!) mp3 without borders? I might be wrong, but you see, sometimes this is the only way one could reach out an album or another and for such there are many explanations and justifications.

"Mostly, I don't decide how many copies that will be printed, it's to a great extent up to the label to choose the size of the issue. I know there are a lot of people sharing audio files and I think it's a good way to distribute to people would otherwise never have a chance to discover the artists. As the situation is right now, most of the people who like and care about the artist and the label do buy the real CD as well, if they are able to find it. But that might change in the future. People who download audio files and like the music very much but don't buy the CD just because they don't want to spend the money… well, those people suck a lot."

Yantra Atmospheres is your own label. Is there any connection to Tantric Harmonies?

"No, there is no such connection from my side at least. I started Yantra Atmospheres in 1996, but I don't know when Tantric started, or if it is inspired by the name of my label."

I have plenty reasons to ask if there is a correlation between you, yoga and your label name? The inner nature of your music is obviously one of meditation.

"Yes, that may be the reason. I don't practice yoga myself, not in the real way at least, but I am kind of interested in meditation/contemplation/introspection."

What about religion? Sometimes I wonder why obsessively using bells-sounds and religious choirs? What could be the relation between your music and religion/faith? Are we alone in the absence of divinity? Or is it that we are alone by nature, no matter what!?

"I am not religious, but I like the themes of myths and legends told by the religions or connected to it by some way. I am quite thrilled of thinking about the Holy Grail, the Armageddon, or Nirvana. I think that's why I use a few religious elements in my music."

Tell me, what other artists who released at COLD MEAT INDUSTRY actually impressed you? Whom do you know better and what do you think of their materials (the one you like or appreciate, of course!)? Generally speaking, what is the atmosphere there, at CMI?

"I think it's a wonderful atmosphere at Cold Meat, almost everybody knows everyone else and we have a great time with each other when we meet (mostly at live performances or birthdays). I am impressed by many artists of CMI, not only for the music but also for their personality. Those (currently on the label) I know best is BDN, DEUTSCH NEPAL, DESIDERII MARGINIS, IRM/SKIN AREA and INSTITUT, and I love their work too. I also am impressed by IN SLAUGHTER NATIVES and ORDO R EQULIBRIO. Almost all artists on the label are interesting people and many of them do great music."

Do you think your music has to get built on a certain backbone-concept or a mood…a state of spirit is just enough? Do we need to build a parallel universe or is it music just sufficient and beautiful just like that?

"I think a sort of backbone-concept is created by automatism from the music, subjectively built in a subconscious way in the first place by the creator, and then listeners may build their own versions out of that. Music is powerful enough to create a universe on its own, and because the music is beautiful."

Is there a strictly positive feeling that might be transmitted by RAISON D'ETRE? Which would be that? Hope? Or is RAISON D'ETRE after all an expression of negative energies?

"For me, RAISON D'ÊTRE express positive energies, at least I become stronger after doing and listening to the music. I am not sure yet what my music transmits could be nothing at all or a lot of different things at the same time. Listeners may have their own feeling of what it transmits, but I must have a deeper understanding of my self (old and wise), before I want to answer the question. I can think about lot of feelings that are transmitted but I am not sure if it's correct, I may never know."

I've noticed that the whole dimension created by your music appertain to "The Self" not taking over any of the classical and so much wasted themes of ambient music belonging to a various range: medieval, demonic, epic or romantic nature. Have you received any proposal from other musicians for projects of different musical styles? I sometimes think about how it would be like if you and Peter from Arcana ever decided for collaboration… It would be at least intriguing… Haven't you ever thought about stepping out the Industrial sphere, at least for a try?

"A few times some people have asked for collaboration, but I don't remember what kind of project it was about. I only know that I didn't want to do it by some reason, probably lack of time or else I was uninterested in it. I have had many ideas of projects, not only industrial ones. I think I already have some projects that can't be called industrial: ATOMINE ELEKTRINE and NECROPHORUS. But, once I thought about doing more in the vein of experimental club techno music or a guitar-based project like SLOWDIVE, but it hasn't happened yet."

Are there any chances to see/hear you live in Romania? How looks Raison live? Tell me something about your concerts in England, Sweden…

"If someone wants to organize a performance in Romania I may consider going there, but I haven't heard from any organizer. I am quite unsure how many persons are in Romania who might be listening to this kind of music. RAISON D'ÊTRE looks nothing special live, I play with some equipment and show a background video, that's all. Doing concerts in England is quite different from the rest of Europe, the audience is standing not in the front, by the scene but in the other end of the room, it's very strange. RAISON D'ÊTRE is not made for live performances, but it can be adapted with the right tools that can create the right atmosphere. But then I have to perform in a catacomb or in a ruin somewhere in a desolated landscape, in low light or darkness, with a very loud sound. This will probably not happen, but it's a wish."

You live in a Nordic country with specific both weather and mentality. Tell me have such factors influenced your music in a way or another?

"I don't know, but people do speak about the music of the cold north. I don't think it has that much to do with the weather as it might have with a specific culture or mentality. Well, if it were as warm as in a desert all year, then perhaps I would not do this kind of music, no one knows. Culture and mentality do influence the music, as everything can be included in these conceptions. I can't tell why the north region should be special or good for raison d'être compared to other regions, like central Europe or Britain."

Before discussing about the impressions your last CD left, could you tell me who is/are the philosopher(s) that marked your existence throughout theories or other writings? Share with me if there is a special certain event or phenomenon that impressed you much during this life (so far!).

"There are a lot of people who say clever things, not only people known as philosophers. But some of the people, who have impressed me by any reason, are C.G. Jung, Nietzsche, Sartre, Hegel and Wittgenstein, but also some oriental thinkers like Chuang-tse and Lao-tse. I can't think of any special event right now, but they exist for sure."

'In abandoned places'… this is a perfect title for the beginning of the last RAISON D'ETRE album! Some random bells ringing in abandoned places (abandoned by hope? Light?) …these must be the gates opening the alienated universe! But, Peter, why such a feeling of abandon(ed)? I lived with the impression that the souls inside your music have chosen the solitude path…what happened though?

"Well, maybe the souls have chosen the solitude path because they have once been abandoned. But actually, the abandoned souls or places don't refer to the same matter as the souls of the solitude path. While a soul of a solitude path is about searching, the abandoned soul is about dying. It's a different story."

Requiem is music for the end! Tell me, is this concept connected to RAISON D'ETRE discography…perhaps this to be the last album? What event did determine you to lay your thoughts over this topic/word/atmosphere in order to define your last material? The music is that strongly suggestive that I have no other choice but to think that real facts…or devastating realities that occurred in your life led you to such tonalities. Do you think you could enter such realms to share with me?

"When it comes to discography and last album, no, this is not the end; think of it as cycles or phases instead. It is difficult to make any validation regarding certain specific matters in the connection of the music and me as a person. It definitely does exist, but it's not possible to point out the exact reason. The only devastating thing that happened, that has to do with the end or death, was that my dog died two-three year ago. On the other hand, I have already had my mourning period for that. The RAISON D'ÊTRE track on the 'Perception Multiplied…' compilation is dedicated to the dog."

We talk again about 100% sampling and this time with much more skillfulness, creativity and originality. It could be said that classical instruments are no longer of any use for you. Tell me, are the choirs filtered on this CD real indeed? Where from does it come that feeling of being inseparable the choirs and the bells? Wouldn't you like to try something new? On a general ground, I believe this CD follows the line of the previous one. One could say it is the climax of your opus so far. What do you think? Where do you place it?

"The choirs are acoustic and real from start, they have no synthetic source, but they are heavily processed in a digital environment in order to suit my need. I always try to make something new for each album, and I think I have done something new for every album; everything can't possibly be entirely new, but big parts of it. The new album follows the line of all my work with RAISON D'ÊTRE and every new album is some sort of climax, pushing the limits further away. That doesn't mean that the previous albums are not as good as the new one, they are just products of their time, and they were climaxes for their time."

Again your last track is very long. Why? It's a ritual,

maybe? Moreover, you used on this track cymbal and trombone. Who is Martin Bladh?

"The track is quite long; it takes some time to build up the special mood. Bowed cymbal and trombone is used in this track, Martin Bladh, known from the Cold Meat projects IRM and SKIN AREA plays them. However those sounds were then heavily processed in a computer, and I only used his mouth and hand for convenience because I had to take care of the recording equipment."

Don't you think that the best review for this material would be a simple impulse for audition? Do you think that promoting it and commercializing it would lead this material to the hands and hearts of those who deserve it? How serious should we take the music of "Requiem for Abandoned Souls"? Is it an album for collection, a proof of maturity or much more… like an intimate ultimate experience?

"There is no best review for the album. There are just plenty of different reviews. I believe many different reviews means great variety, and that is much better than aiming for one single best review, none such thing exists. Reviews are only subjective opinions, nothing else. Like any other album 'Requiem for Abandoned Souls' should only be seen as music. Such things as maturity or ultimate experience are only subjective thoughts. I can't claim I am doing the ultimate experience for everyone. For me it's a serious album, but I can only speak for myself. I think it's wrong to talk about the music as something that should only be enjoyed for those who deserves it. Anyone deserves it as much as everyone else does."

What can you tell me about the next RAISON D'ETRE material? You surely must have some ideas… somewhere in your realm of solitude and you surely must know if this very material "pleased" you or not. I only say that because I know that usually the next material encloses ideas and feelings not expressed on the previous one or emotions that failed to complete your soul and your exigent requirements…

"It's too early to talk anything about the next album yet, but I do have some thoughts. I have thoughts all the time but that doesn't mean it will evolve into a working concept. Every album is the end of that chapter; I have completely emptied myself during the composition process. I don't try to remake it, or do it better on the next album. For me, the next album is always something different. I don't say that every album is perfect when it's finished, but I am satisfied when it is, that's enough, else I would never be able to complete an album."

Who is Peter Andersson in the real life: job, family, hobbies, musical tastes, books…

"Real life, I think RAISON D'ÊTRE is very much real life too. I don't have a job or a family; I study at the University, a course called Culture, Society and Media Production. I have a lot of other interests except for music. I like art, watching movies, drinking alcohol and go to a party. Filmmakers I like: David Lynch, Andrei Tarkovskij, Werner Herzog, Darren Aronofsky, Carl Johan de Geer & Hakan Alexandersson, Peter Greenaway, Roman Polanski, Harmonie Korine, Pasolini, Gaspar Noe etc... When it comes to music I most like: TG, SPK, Lustmord, Organum, Coil, Ora, Werkbund, Tomas Koner, Voice of Eye, Sleep Chamber, Troum, Maeror Tri, Robert Rich, Nocturnal Emissions, Non, Brian Eno, Stina Nordenstam, Slowdive, Cranes, Colder, etc… Art: Bosch, Rembrandt, Friedrich, Turner, Tatlin, Dali, Magritte, Bacon, Rotko, and David Lynch etc…Books: well, not much time left over for reading more than my university literature, but such topics as abnormal sex, gay, pain are always amusing."

You have a very discrete and elegant site… It's useful for you? For the fans is a real enchanting…

"The site is for promotion and for my fans, so I hope they like it a lot. I like discrete designs; else it would just be a mess for the viewer. Some people are ordering records from the site as well, so I guess it's useful for me in an economical point of view too."

Here we are at the end and here I come with a last idea, perhaps a little bit weird. Tell me, how would you feel if no one would (ever) listen to your music? If you would find yourself abandoned by all who should or deserved to understand you? How important is the transcendence of your emotions and thought from inside to outside?

"Actually, I would still do music even if no one had heard my music at all. I still do music for my own joy, just as I did for about 15 years ago, when I started to compose music on my own. If all my fans stopped listening to my music today, well, yes I would feel abandoned, but I would still do music, it's a part of my life. The transcendence of my emotions and thoughts is very important, that's what the creative process is all about, to format and shape the inside to the outside, to express the ideas and thoughts. That's the world of the artist."

And the last words of Peter were: "I think this is, both in extent and in time consuming, the biggest interview I ever done."
Thank you Peter and good luck!

December 2003



Photos: Fredrik Rydberg

ALBUM REVIEWS

This is just a new chapter of reviews, as subjective as always and less optimistic than so far... But I assure you my desire is to outline a real image for a material that someday might become a piece of collection for some of you. Of course, there will be times when you might be tricked but as I already told you, the subjectivism is dominant! Still, do not forget that what counts, in the end, it is just the buyer's opinion... the one's who's buying the album... since anything else is just a matter of expressing a point of view... solely details!

:GREEN CARNATION(NOR)-"A Blessing In Disguise" CD'03 (9 tracks, 56. 21 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)



Strange sensation! Right after the audition of a first track I remained completely disappointed by Tchort's new Heavy Progressive Rock approach. I really had great expectations; after a timid debut and a second sensational outcome I felt like being natural for the Norwegians to follow up the Metal Progressive line they embraced so far. Well, it seems like their decision was precisely to break the underground border and to explore Melodic Rock realms. Starting with "Lullaby In Winter", GC outlines a more commercial and tangible facet with slow tracks of a certain charm. The entire album is ruled by a clear and perhaps rather too light voice (like in the Progressive style) and a mesmerising piano. Although the sound has nothing of Metal within, there is a Dark remain somewhere in the background while both keyboard and guitars follow tunes familiar to '70's sound. Thus, we could enjoy a calm Hard Rock, which simply outlines rather the inner harmony of the album than the virtuosity of the musicians. I still find so difficult to accept the fact that Tchort has chosen such a commercial line for this project... The future for such could only bring a contract with a Non-Metal label and a possible promotion of this album might be a series of various gigs. If the piano/keyboard didn't exist here, then the whole album might have been labelled as Melodic Rock with a light and really positive message. Even if for many Metal fans this sound might seem rather simplistic, I am sure that those who prefer more peaceful Metal or the fans of Rock would know how to appreciate this direction. Evolving doesn't mean the same thing, thinking or the same values for everybody. Probably, if someone gave me this album to listen to without mentioning the author I wouldn't have rushed to listen to it again... not to mention that I definitely would have failed to recognize the author... despite the fact that there still are some echoes of IN THE WOODS... drums! The album cover features a boy 3-4 years old, perhaps Tchort's son. As you well know, GC has suffered some changes in 1998, after 8 years of pause and the fundamental concept for the debut album was inspired by the death of Tchort's daughter. But many had happened since then and probably the fury and dark emotions of this talented musician remain to be expressed solely throughout BLOOD RED THRONE and CARPATHIAN FOREST. www.green-carnation.tk. Rating: 0.78/1 (22.09)

ACHERON(USA)-"Rebirth: Metamorphosis into Godhood" CD'03 (9 tracks, 53. 36 min)
(THE END/BLACK LOTUS)

Indeed strange... as I knew that Vincent Crowley's band tore apart! Well, in a new formula, beside those from INCANTATION, BURNING INSIDE and WOLFEN SOCIETY, Vincent returns with a new sample of Satanic Death/Black Metal but nothing spectacular or outrageously new since all is presented in the same furious and hateful manner. I cannot deny it is good music as, no matter what, they have reached 15 years of activity insisting on guitars' speed and battery's ravishing rhythms. We have now more diversified vocals since, apart from Vincent's demonic voice, we can distinguish some spoken words and even some echoes of female voices. It doesn't imply that ACHERON has become a fashionable band! The sound is unaltered... it is just that from time to time they inserted some elements of today... probably solely in order to diversify the music. The album's cover is so... disgusting, at least for my eyes... as who knows... some (Satanists?) might find it interesting. This is an album OK, which unfortunately is nourished by past not the present! www.acheron666.com Rating: 0.79/1 (01.02)

AJATTARA(FIN)-"Kuolema" CD'03 (10 tracks, 33. 43 min)
(SPIKEFARM)

After releasing an album that didn't impress me much, The Finns come back with a new sample of Finnish Metal somewhere between Melodic, Death and Black Metal, but with a lento rhythm and a few traditional influences. The Black vocals seem to fit perfectly with the rest of the sound, which is obviously a trump card. This is a pleasant music but it has neither the strength nor the expressivity of an album intelligently conceived. It is just another kind of extreme Metal... www.ajattara.cjb.net Rating: 0.79/1 (30.11)

AMARAN(SWE)-"Pristine In Bondage" CD'04 (10 tracks, 43. 32 min)
(LISTENABLE/THE END)

Such a weird choice! Extremely Heavy riffs on a background rather Thrash/Death Metal, with a devastating battery and a... female voice, this would be a succinct presentation. I am not used with such combinations and I admit I was a little surprised of such manner of compiling ingredients. I must agree, the female voice (a kind of MADDER MORTEM with touches of THE GATHERING) brings colour to a sound that otherwise would get lost into the sea of bands that approach such already "cannibalized" style! Moreover, such voice discharges an impressing energy and I think that the way it communicates with the guitars... it is absolutely successful! I can also notice tracks in which extreme male voices burst out and I believe it forces the sound to be complete. Well, I am pretty sure that on the stage the adrenaline gets higher and higher almost instantly! I realize that we actually deal with the second album, right after a well-received debut in 2002. In other words, we can face here something between IN FLAMES and ARCH ENEMY. www.amaran.net Rating: 0.78/1 (20.01)

AM'GANESHA'N(FRA)-"Somnia" CD'03 (14 tracks, 53. 54 min)
(HOLY)

I'd say it is quite strange this second album of the ex-member RAJNA, Gerard! He, beside other members of SPEAKING SILENCE and LES SECRETS DU MORPHEE released two years ago a debut of which everybody had solely words of praise. Brave descendents of DEAD CAN DANCE profile, the five insist on the same Ethno Gothic Heavenly dimension and bring here 14 tracks of a great variety, with plenty influences of all kinds (Tibetan, Indian Egyptian) usually based on exquisite expressive female vocals. Although I am a devoted fan of DEAD CAN DANCE, I consider this sound to be slightly out of any proportion and at a certain point all those female voices become rather boring because of some repetitive elements dropped in all along the album. They use unconventional instruments and create thus a divine sound, from time to time! Well, it is obvious that, like in RAJA case, we can witness extremely talented and skilful musicians but I think they insist too much on the introverted aspect so that they finally come to create a confusing mood even if the listener can reach a state of maximum relaxation! All in all, if you enjoyed the first album, trust me, it is worth to purchase the second as well! It is a special music, hard to conceive and execute but one that can go straight to your heart! Rating: 0.83/1 (17.01)

ANATHEMA(UK)-"A Natural Disaster" CD'03 (10 tracks, 55. 25 min)
(MUSIC FOR NATIONS)

The seventh album of the British was indeed expected all around especially since the previous album, "A Fine Day to Exit" was pretty well received and reviewed by the entire musical mass-media. Since in my vision, the Metal experience with ANATHEMA practically ended once Darren left, the only thing I can do is to enter again the realm of Atmospheric Rock and to try to describe this new chapter. Well, by all means, it is a straight follow-up of the previous material and this time the melancholic aura is even more outlined with psychedelic Rock echoes, a calm keyboard, a romantic piano and transcendental guitars. The voice is simply unchanged and the calm set free is seldom interrupted by few aggressive passages, which actually colour even more the sad meditative sound. "Flying" is a depressing track, damned depressing, but superb and there is present as well in the "picture" the voice of the drum player's sister, in a simple appearance and with no connection with the other tracks. In fact, I really don't see this album as a conceptual one but rather as a sum of various tracks well arranged but with slightly noticeable stylistic differences. However, the last four tracks are the most flourishing ones and the atmosphere they bring into your soul is absolutely relaxing. We could say that Cavanagh brothers try to prove that there is still strength to continue the musical experience started many years ago, even if they do it in a fragile manner and (why not saying it?) in lack of new attractive elements! I consider that today's ANATHEMA lives still within the echoes of what once was since the actual shades of PORTISHEAD or AIR have nothing in common with the meditative Metal they used to perform long time ago! Or... to be even more precise: this very album is a nice one but nothing to be enclosed in the Metallic perspective! Rating: 0.82/1 (18.10)

ANKH(POL)-"Expect Unexpected" CD'03
(16 tracks, 55. 46 min)
(METAL MIND)

For me, this is an unknown band, but in Poland it is pretty popular. I am not a declared fan of such combination: Electronic with Progressive Rock or even Ethno-Folk and that is why I won't try to get myself into something I am not fully aware of! Therefore, I think this might be a new experience for many of you but I warn you, it is a little too heavy if not even too tiring, at least for my tastes! http://ankh.art.pl Rating: 0.72/1 (17.11)

ANTIMATTER(UK)-"Lights Out" CD'03 (10 tracks, 59. 24 min)
(THE END/PROPHECY)

Duncan Patterson (ex-ANATHEMA) has some perseverance in his veins and after a shy debut returns with a prettier album in PINK FLOYD's style and with some Ambient tendencies. Otherwise it is just Rock Electronic moulded on a Dark Melancholic aura, alternative vocals in lack of charm and personality, instruments playing almost perfect but with no dynamism or a clear message. I'd say it is an idea to be appreciated here as Duncan and Mick Moss are really talented with instruments but not that gifted to enter the "waters" of great Roger Waters and I must say... the vocals need a little more practice. Despite such, there is a track to be remembered, the second one. I see ANTIMATTER definitely more profound and serious than before with a single male voice and I believe that a future album must reveal the conceptual identity of these two refined musicians. But, unless they reach this, this very release can only awake your curiosity and maybe a little of your respect for such sound. Rating: 0.78/1 (29.06)

ANTIQUE(CAN)-"Book One" CD'02 (8 tracks, 55. 02 min)
(TROSTLOS)

I haven't understood almost anything from what ANTIQUE tries to express here. Should it be Metal, Doom Death, Dark Wave or

Ambient… or perhaps Classical or Symphonic? I'd rather say it is a soundtrack! Anyway, indeed it is a bloody freaking weirdness in the proper meaning of the word! Here we are "enjoying" a sinister ambient sound based on a bombastic keyboard and a dubious voice in old WINTER manner. I think that this kind of musical approach goes well with a horror motion picture, solely a horror one! Otherwise, some guiding marks might be MORTHS or ULVER but with a more Metallic note in this case. http://trostlos.org Rating: 0.81/1 (19.10)

ANTONIUS REX(ITA)-"Neque Semper Arcum Tendit Rex" CD'03 (6 tracks, 43. 32 min)
(BLACK WIDOW)
We face here a myth for Occult Dark Progressive Rock field, which came to life more than 35 years ago and had Antonio Bartoccetti as mentor. Right beside Doris Norton, they succeeded to release seven albums, two under JACULA label and the rest under the actual one. The line up was different during the years but they both remained firm on the ground. This very album is a reprint of an album released in 1974, perhaps the best one after the brilliant "Praeternatural". What can we discover in ANTONIUS REX? Intonations, electric guitars, a keyboard church-like, sober atmosphere… nothing to be told or compared with. Well I sincerely do recommend you to try an experiment like this as well. It is worth! Rating: 0.83/1 (14.09)

APOSTASY(SWE)-"Cell 666" CD'04 (9 tracks, 41. 36 min)
(BLACK MARK)



If I had to overview this material, I'd say that this album brings nothing new into the musical scene. But… after listening and listening to the album I came to the conclusion that the Swedes are indeed professional. Featuring influences from CRADLE OF FILTH and DIMMU BORGIR and a serious touch of the Swedish Melodic current, the Black Metal presented here is extremely full of energy and explosive with an extremely atmospheric keyboard, Heavy guitar riffs and demonic vocals accurately blended in a dynamic background. The keyboard often reminds me of ARCTURUS especially of those cosmic touches the Norwegians used us with… all these years! It is a pity that the voice is so linear and focused solely on aggressiveness! I wonder how would have been if that amazing piano was accompanied by a clear clean voice?! Well, all in all, this is a sensational debut both in execution and mixing, which actually announce a new year full of extreme Metal surprises! www.blackmark.net Rating: 0.85/1 (04.12)

ARCANE ART(NOR)-"Krita Ran" CD'03 (7 tracks, 54. 45 min)
(DRAGON FLIGHT)
Karsten Hamre comes up with a new album or, better said, with the instrumental version of the album he released at Fossil Dungeon. I haven't understood much from this sound because, at a detailed analysis, the fusion of Experimental Post Rock and Industrial Dark Ambient simply produces to the listener a strange sensation of a weird sinister music and I wouldn't be wrong if appreciating this music as a "faded" one. There are battery, guitars, effects, percussion and bass but they are not sufficient for creating an attractive friendly sound. Bizarre album… that's for sure! www.neokunst.com/arcaneart Rating: 0.77/1 (16.11)

ASMEGIN(NOR)-"Hin Vordende Sod&So" CD'03 (11 tracks, 42. 18 min)
(NAPALM)
There is so much effort, so much participation and a colossal stylistic mixture! Well, this so much expected debut was released in august. They claim to belong to a Viking Folk Metal style and it is partially true. Yet I must confess, the rhythm ruptures confuse me… and I come to understand so little! From traditional parts (flute, violin, harp, piano, lovely female vocals) I find myself almost instantly thrown out in the middle of a noisy chaotic and brutal Black/Death Metal with a throaty voice. I do admit, the approach on the execution is irreproachable while the musical concept is really innovative but I am afraid it is not enough. Since, after all it is about a concoction of ideas and concepts, all packed in 11 tracks of which some are good, some are confused and some have no contour. Perhaps if ASMEGIN insisted on traditional-folk valences, the album would have been a real musical jewel. If I relate the album to the Metallic spectrum, then there is definitely nothing to impress. Another remark: for this album there were many famous guest-players: Lars Nedland (BORKNAGAR, SOLEFALD), Sareeta (RAMZET), Lars Fredrik (WHITE WILLOW, WOBLER) + other local musicians who have no connection with Metal. This is an exquisite debut for both concept and inspiration but in lack of cursiveness and shape. Maybe those would come along with the next material… www.asmegin.com Rating: 0.78/1 (20.09)

ATRIUM CARCERI(SWE)-"Cellblock" CD'03 (12 tracks, 43. 02 min)
(COLD MEAT)
The well known Simon Heath (ZA FRUMI/Waerloga Records) has decided to found a new Darkwave project but this time a very complex one, full of mystery, verve and vibration, based on a synthetic sound obtained through out exquisite technical mixing, impressive effects and sinister noises. It is like a magic journey into the dark and thus nothing is certain, nothing is clear…everything is relative and unexpected. I think his music might be just perfect for some horror movies. It is pretty obvious that solitude, isolation and depression are the main sources of inspiration for Simon and the cold sad and depressive atmosphere thus created is just a great sample of Dark/Ambient with pale touches of Industrial. And for a contemplative "landscape", inside a background of noises and dazzling roars there can be heard from time to time some voices reciting sombre lyrics. A very important "detail" is that the album was mastered by no one else than Peter Andersson (RAISON D' ETRE). www.coldmeat.se Rating: 0.82/1 (29.11)

ATROX(NOR)-"Orgasm" CD'03 (8 tracks, 51. 05 min)
(CODE666)



Monika Edvardsen owns an exquisite voice and its inflections remind me of Kate Bush! After three albums well received, even if hard to be understood, the Norwegians come in forth with a new chapter of Schizo Progressive Metal, very knotty, complex, outstanding and noisy. We couldn't talk about Gothic Metal but rather about a proper sound in which elements of all kind were inserted: Jazz, Rock, Psychedelic, Power, Doom Death, and Melodic… Well, as observation… each new album is more and more avant-garde and twisted, which may confuse the listener in a way or another. From another point of view, as rhythm and melody, the album is out of any cliché or pattern. It is impossible for you not to recognize ATROX or, better said, not to recognize that "crawling" voice… with Indian Arabian or Asian influences. The guitar riffs are succinct and explosive even staccato, the bass tends to become Power while the synth simply surprises one's ear! But above all I find indeed interesting all the passages where beside Monika's voice intertwines a clear male voice completing thus a sound rather too technical for the fans of cursive Metal. www.atrox-web.com Rating: 0.82/1 (22.02)

AVARITIA(GER)-"Pulse" MCD'03 (7 tracks, 29. 17 min)
(EQUINOXE)
This duo follows the same easy and very rhythmic Gothic Rock approach, with pompous bass and euphoric guitar riffs, an atmospheric female voice, in British style manner or even more correct, in 80's Wave style. This very MCD is a very good one and the resulted music discharges a kind of a charming melancholic aura. I think this band evolution is something we should watch on! www.avaritia.net Rating: 0.81/1 (30.11)

BATHORY(SWE)-"Nordland I" CD'03 (10 tracks, 59. 23min)
(THE END/BLACK MARK)
Right after the embarrassing "Destroyer Of Worlds", Quorthon brings now a part of his new compositions, in an Epic Viking Metal shape, which intends to reach a similar atmosphere as in "Twilight Of The Gods". Well, unlike the album released 12 years ago, the new material starts well and manages to keep this pulse. So far so good! From another perspective, the tracks are rather fade, common, resembling one with the others, in lack of force and expressivity. I have the impression this album was conceived in hurry and thus the Epic atmosphere seems "not sufficient" to fill an audition of almost an hour. There is a very good track, "Foreverdark Woods", which actually meets all the ingredients of a complete composition, from melodiousness, rhythm and virtuosity to Traditional Folk tunes, full of wary messages. I guess there are some tracks as well reminding me of earlier MANOWAR yet solely as far as instrumentation is concerned (vocals are really in lack of that tremendous vigour) and that would be about all! Is either the greyage or the lack of inspiration, or maybe the desire of return to old times, well, I wouldn't know for sure, but this album turns out to be a fade copy of "Blood On Ice", not the best of theirs, but the closest to "Nordland I" as far as the stylistic message is concerned. Still, I find the album's cover embarrassing and so is the booklet's simplistic layout. So, it seems like not even this second part set the Thames on fire! Rating: 0.78/1 (09.02)

BATTLELORE(FIN)-"Sword's Song" CD'03 (12 tracks, 46. 44 min)
(NAPALM)
Well, this second album of the Finns comes out in a great profile and the Tolkian aura successfully conjoins the musicians' stage appearance. As far as music is regarded, BATTLELORE practically keeps in the same explosive highlighted Epic Fantasy Metal, full of rhythm and atmosphere and I must say melodiousness has found its origin within this material: Heavy guitars, epic choirs, traditional instruments, exhaustive keyboard, warrior-like vocals well mixed with romantic ones… I guess I'll never find out why some are that mad about this kind of sound! I truly find it rather too bombastic and much too commercial and thus sometimes a little too demanding for an incessant audition. It is, if you like, a beautiful romantic musical story made up in simplistic and puerile tunes yet pretty harmoniously completed just like if it was a "Lord Of the Rings" version in musical notes. Since I haven't caught this "virus", even if I make lots of efforts to accept it as a serious one, I do let your decision regarding this band review up to you and only, especially since this band sensibly amazes the entire Europe! www.battlelore.net Rating: 0.76/1 (22.06)

BELPHEGOR(AUT)-"Lucifer Incestus" CD'03 (9 tracks, 36. 11 min)
(NAPALM)
I wonder how a band like this one could survive over the years since they actually play for more than 12 years exactly in the same slaughtering manner! This is a Death Metal in a blasphemy-like type, full of hatred, violent but full of energy as well! This is the fourth chapter of the Austrians and they don't seem too tired! Most certainly, this album will rise up the fans' adrenaline even if for the inspiration or originality topic… they don't have too many tools; on the contrary they could use such presence! www.belphegor.at Rating: 0.78/1 (01.11)

BESEECH(SWE)-"Drama" CD'04 (8 tracks, 40. 12 min)
(NAPALM)
The fourth album of the band seems to keep looking for a proper unique sound, somewhere between Gothic and Rock. If I had to be punctual and really critical, I'd say that "Higher Level" is an exact reproduction of what CEMETARY performs… "Voices" imitates TYPE O NEGATIVE elements, while "Forever Falling" sends you to THE GATHERING. Lotta Hoglin's voice is a really strong one but in the shadow of Erik Molarin's one, which is of low timbre, lightly baritone and impressing. I think the most elegant and successful track is the first, the one which gives the album title, as it is amazingly full of energy and Metal atmosphere! On the other hand, because of Klas Bohlin's departure, the sound embraced a new contour, more experimental, perhaps even with Heavy or Groovy touches. Otherwise… it is just a Gothic Rock with Pop references, plenty atmospheric elements, all captured together into a melodic structure, probably just perfect to enjoy in a live performance! www.beseech.net Rating: 0.80/1 (14.12)

BERSERK(SPA)-"Rites Of Supremacy" CD'03 (7 tracks, 42. 53 min)
(OAKEN SHIELD)
We meet again Black Metal but this time from the Iberia! It looks like the Nordic sonorities have conquered little by little all European corners. They claim to follow a traditional Black Metal and such can be heard on a few slower passages but apart this, we can only discuss of classical Nordic Metal. I admit, the synth outlines an atmospheric appearance, even a melodic one, but there is nothing else besides. The ex- ABADDON has reached the second album released and I am sincere when telling you that it is a very intelligent Black, pleasant, modern and entertaining Black Metal. Despite such…I am afraid this might not be enough…www.berserkhorde.com Rating: 0.79/1 (09.12)

BEYOND DAWN(NOR)-"Frysh" CD'03 (14 tracks, 68. 23 min)
(PEACEVILLE)



Strange!!! But definitely amazing! I have no idea what they play! Started on Black/Death Metal structure in the beginning of '90's, the Nordic band has radically changed its style over the years and I think it is pretty difficult to label their music. I do recognize some electronic elements, some peaceful guitar tunes, the staccato battery and a superb calm clear male voice! It is not Rock, neither Pop nor Trip-Hop or Dance. It might be a little of each but the most important thing is that one can notice a deep Dark aura floating around. Otherwise, it is just an undefined music. It is probably something to listen to in pubs after a drink but I think you can dance it as well. I remember that after releasing an EP, poorly promoted, Longing For Scarlet Days, the Norwegians released in 1995 (if I am not mistaken) an excellent debut, Pity Love, at Candlelight. After that Misanthropy releases the most unconventional album they ever had, Revelry, and then the two experiments: In Reverie and Electric Sulking Machine. I don't know if this one is better than Revelry because the sound evolved fast towards a melancholic experimental Pop but Espen's voice still reminds me often of Michaela Gira (SWANS), which means quality, no doubt! It probably remains to be mentioned that the CD contains a strange video-clip completing thus the status of nonconformist musicians. www.beyonddawn.com Rating: 0.89/1 (30.10)

BLAZING ETERNITY(DEN)-"A World To Drown In" CD'03 (9 tracks, 45. 54 min)
(PROPHECY)



This is just another tremendous surprise! After releasing an album that mixed brutal Black Metal with atmospheric Gothic touches, the four Danes have focused on a more peaceful melancholic and romantic sound. Thus, I can say that the latest compositions simply are a Gothic Rock jewel… with clear vocals, depressive guitars and melodic passages. I really can't say if this is a Metal, Rock or Pop album… but I do know that it is one of the first 10 on my actual playlist! There are some resemblances to ANATHEMA, KATATONIA, BEYOND DAWN… plus other characteristics elements for a sound able to aim straight to your (mine, for sure!) heart! www.blazingeternity.dk Rating: 0.90/1 (01.12)

BLODSRIT(SWE)-"Ocularis Infernum" CD'03 (9 tracks, 42. 32 min)
(OAKEN SHIELD)
This is an elegant first rate album, well made up, accurate in interpretation and with plenty of melodic passages. All is based on Black Metal in Nordic style, with deep roots in MARDUK or CARPATHIAN FOREST. It reminds me a little of RAGNAROK's debut! After a discreet debut, Nazgul finds other three members and, taking benefit of Dan Swano's mixing skills, releases a strong album with extremely aggressive vocals and a battery that seems to never stop. It was a pleasant audition… turning my face to the past but…, let's not forget, we still are in III Millennium! Innovation, originality…? Maybe this is just an obsession of mine! www.blodsrit.com Rating: 0.80/1 (06.12)

BLOOD(GER)-"Dysangelium" CD'03 (21 tracks, 39. 20 min)
(MORBID)
These old timers still perform! It's been more than 17 years since the band has been founded and the Death Grind note seems not to be altered. With such prolific activity there is little for me to say even if what they play now is identical with what they started years ago: just aggressiveness, primitivism, apocalyptic atmosphere, explosive riffs, inhuman vocals and an outrageous battery. An album dedicated 100% to those who still listen and enjoy extreme brutal frames! And when I think about the fact there are 21 tracks in less than 40 minutes… I come to realize this is a real holocaust for death fans! Rating: 0.79/1 (19.10)

BLOOD RED THRONE(NOR)-"Affiliated With The Suffering" CD'03 (11 tracks, 39. 05 min)
(HAMMERHEART)
Mama mia, what a production…what recordings… and what a perfect mixed outcome! Although I am not keen on cursive Death Metal, this last album of theirs really pleased me. Which would be the "pluses" in comparison with "Monument Of Death"? Superior technique, emphatic aggressiveness, remarkable rapidity and a clear production! BRT features now that classical Death Metal that brought popularity to bands such as ENTOMBED, GORGUTS, DEATH or OBITUARY. In other words, we find here influences both from the American and Swedish scenes, while the fast passages simply remind me of old SLAYER. Everything sounds exemplary, by the book, I'd say yet with one single remark: the innovation chapter is completely missing. Anyway, this is a real explosive device for all nostalgic fans of brutality-type. For the rest of us, this is nothing more than a sample of routine… Rating: 0.75/1 (06.02)

BUTTERFLY MESSIAH(USA)-"Eternal" CD'04 (12 tracks, 56. 12 min)
(THE FOSSIL DUNGEON)
The second album of the three Americans is even more orientated towards ATTRITION or DIE FORM and its Gothic Dark Wave is even more loaded with Medieval, Neo-Classical, Trip Hop, EBM, Synth-Pop-dance elements. The female voice is dominant in the sound and even if very Heavy its multiple inflections are surprising. It is not exactly my kind of music but I must confess that surrounded by that many tough and extreme Metal sonorities I actually had experienced a great pleasure in entering a rhythmic technical and synthetic Wave Dance universe. www.butterflymessiah.com Rating: 0.82/1 (03.03)

CARPATHIAN FOREST(NOR)-"Defending The Throne Of Evil" CD'03 (12 tracks, 51. 28 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)
This band has become a cult on Metal scene thanks to 2 demos, very well mediated, and probably thanks as well to the fact they didn't rush to release many albums! Even if the modern influences point out dozens of atmospheric bands, there is a Black Metal mirage, an underground-unaltered one that continues to keep some fans' attention still awakened. For those fans, CARPATHIAN FOREST is still a great band, faithful to an orientation that might even represent a life style. I should mention that one of the two indispensable members, Nordavind, has been replaced in the last couple of years so that R. Nattefrost has now as colleagues fellows such as: Tchort (BLOOD RED THRONE, GREEN CARNATION), A. Kobro (ex-IN THE WOODS…) and the bass player/synth Vrangsinn. The new material is greatly arranged and undeniably posted into the core of Norwegian Black Metal universe. I'd say it is rather brutal, not at all atmospheric (in a bombastic version) and probably less melodious than one could expect. Here and there, some traditional folk passages come out and produce a great impact to the ear and so it happens with the Heavy Metal guitar's riffs. It is an aggressive screaming voice and I think that the rest of the composition does not go too far from what we used to listen to 10 years ago. Even if CARPATHIAN FOREST comes out with probably the best album in their history, I'd say that the orientation carries not major transformations in comparison with either "Black Shining Leather", "Strange Old Brew" or "Morbid Fascination Of Death". I could even say this album is in fact a well-deserved tribute to True Norwegian Black Metal and those who still believe in this concept will find a great pleasure in these 12 new tracks. If we had to regard this material strictly from the musical point of view, the Norwegians surely bring out a real jewel. Let's see: the synth passages alternate with those of a tremendous drum machine, the fast guitar parts harmoniously communicate with demonic vocals and even the experimental tracks such as "Cold Murderous Music" or "The Old House On The Hill" seem to create such indescribable stylistic confusion that one could hardly label it. The entire album might be a "interpreted" as a homage to the devil/evil as the musical path is one walked by hundreds of Black Norwegian bands in the last couple of decades. In fact, CARPATHIAN FOREST actually prepared for their fans exactly what they desired: a healthy Black Metal! Rating: 0.82/1 (18.02)

CHARON(FIN)-"The Dying Daylights'03 (11 tracks, 44. 32 min)
(SPINEFARM)
The fourth album of the Finns simply goes on with a Melodic Heavy Metal line but this time enclosing as well plenty of Gothic shadows, which is a very inspired experiment. We can hear clear clean vocals, pretty peaceful ones and everything sounds natural without any artificial obtrusions or fashionable fakes. It seems like CHARON preferred to follow their own musical line and for such courage they do deserve our respect. Recordings and mixing are really super and I think this proves they are professional and committed to what they do; therefore we can enjoy a brilliant sound. On the other side, I think there is also pretty obvious that they do belong to that specific melodic line pretty characteristic to Finnish scene. www.charon.cjb.net Rating: 0.79/1 (04.11)

CIRCLE OF DEAD CHILDREN(USA)-"Human Harvest" CD'03 (19 tracks, 35. 28 min)
(FROM BEYOND)
This is just another sick band and I have in mind the proper meaning of the word! Brutal Death/Grind, with plenty references to Gore, short tracks, intense energy, diabolic vocals even demented, distorted guitars, killing drums…hell over the earth! Sincerely, I think I am definitely out of any kind of contact to this "music"! And when I know this is the third album of the band… I start shivering… www.circleofdeadchildren.net Rating: 0.72/1 (29.11)

CLOSTERKELLER(POL)-"Graphite" CD'03 (14 tracks, 65. 57 min)
(METAL MIND)



This band is very famous in Poland and its activity reached over 15 years experience!!! They played alongside COCTEAU TWINS and CLAN OF XYMOX on the same stage and moreover, the female vocal player, Anja, once played with JETHRO TULL for the mini-tour they had in Poland! This is an album initially released in 1999 but only now in an English version as well. Since for me CLOSTERKELLER is a premiere, I will refer solely to this material. Well, I suppose New Wave Gothic Rock would be the most appropriate portrayal. With a superb female voice and rhythmic or atmospheric tunes, the band has to offer to the listener a melodic melancholic sound, full of rhythm and nostalgia! All in all, the band has released 11 CDs so far and I think it is the time you should find out more about it by visiting their site: www.anja.pl Rating: 0.82/1 (16.11)

CROMESHIFT(DEN)-"Ripples In Time" CD'03 (12 tracks, 53. 47 min)
(DVS)
Excellent Progressive Metal! The same as in EVERON, TRESHOLD or MAGELLAN cases (as far as vocals are concerned… there are strong resemblances with the bands up-mentioned!), the Danes come out with a very good album, sometimes too knotty, with openings of all kinds, in DREAM THEATRE style, which proves a certain talent at "handling" the instruments. As far as originality is regarded, I'd say they are not the best… but all in all… this album can be considered as a good one. As you all might

know already, this kind of voice is not my favorite one and therefore I keep the distance from such style. Yet, I am sincere when telling you I have no possible complains for the execution! www.dvsrecords.com Rating: 0.78/1 (04.12)

CULT OF LUNA(SWE)-"The Beyond" CD'03 (10 tracks, 74. 56 min)
(EARACHE)
It is for the first time when I listen to this band but I can assure you it is worth it! It is about an elaborated Death Metal, sometimes even experimental, with plenty of lent passages, a grave dimension retrospecting to WINTER or PAN-THY-MONIUM. There is an imposing voice and a surprising interchange in guitars' riffs. It is a tough-rough album and words are useless to describe it. I think it is a super-production you definitely shouldn't miss! www.cultofluna.com Rating: 0.82/1 (22.09)

DARGAARD(AUT)-"Rise And Fall" CD'04 (9 tracks, 56. 20 min)
(NAPALM)



The album features a first track completely changed from what I knew... extremely long (over 10 minutes), with theatrical effects... like a movie soundtrack, based on bombastic choirs and a charming female voice. After such amazing beginning, DARGAARD returns to that enigmatic/magic Dark Wave full of romanticism and mysticism. Elisabeth's angelic voice is more present now than it used to be in the past and only seldom is interrupted by Tharen's aggressive voice. But even here we could extend our analysis as in the background clean male voices rather hymnal and of a choir could be heard. It is a synthetic sound but atmospheric as well, very melodic and captivating so that listening to all eight tracks it can only be a break through normality! The piano is even more powerful and clear with vigorous references to Classic and Dramatic while more and more passages are more diverse, full of colour and rhythm entwining both modern and traditional elements... and even medieval ones! After a fascinating debut, Tharen and Elisabeth have released another two similar albums, I'd say even identical, in which both tracks' resemblance and linearity could be the only negative aspects! The new DARGAARD chapter comes in with new elements, more inspiringly combined but as background... the music is simply the same! It was a real pleasure to listen to this album because it is about a unique sound: DARGAARD but nothing more! www.dargaard.com Rating: 0.86/1 (24.02)

DARK FORTRESS(GER)-"Profane Genocidal Creations" CD'03 (10 tracks, 68. 29 min)
(REDSTREAM)
Well I lived to catch this day- German bands recording in Pytten's studios, in Norway, namely, Grieghallen! Therefore, I found out that the album's intro (otherwise pretty bombastic and imposing) was composed and interpreted by Morfeus (LIMBONIC ART) while on few passages Ares (AETERNUS) features as well. The six Germans' music is desired to be aggressive and modern in the same time whereas the Epic Black Metal line is a dominant mark. Except the atmospheric sequences and some melodic elements interposed with female vocals, the rest of the material is a common place for Black field, perhaps a little too coloured and full of various influences, from Death, Black and Dark to la Heavy or even Atmospheric. Well, it is a listenable sound, in lack of identity, aggressive vocals punctuating the clear ones and with a fast and submissive drum machine. What I find amazing are the guitar parts, the fastness and skilfulness of the musicians and I consider such just the band's aces. On the other hand, I must confess, these new tracks are by far above those included in "Tales From Eternal Dusk" and this makes of it a high quality emblem for German Black Metal. I'd say that it is pretty noticeable the seriousness of the six both in conceiving and performing this chapter and I am sure it will completely satisfy the tastes of all adepts of multidimensional complex Black Metal! www.thetruedarkfortress.com Rating: 0.77/1 (09.02)

DARK REFLECTIONS(GER)-"Dark Epic Metal Offerings" demo CD'03 (4 tracks, 16. 50 min)
This is a professional demo and I believe that the six musicians have invested some substantial finances hoping that this way a contract might be easy to get! It may work just fine, although I am disappointed of that Power tendency they developed. With a strong desire of gaining more and more popularity among fans, the band has decided to include in its proper sound as many influences as possible from Gothic or Doom Death Metal la Atmospheric or even Power Metal! Well, we have some Heavy guitars, three keyboards dominating the entire background and a vocal mixture that seems to be quite OK. I can notice a few Epic shadows but all in all I believe that the tracks are much more lighter than what they intended at the first place! Perhaps "Wishes Awaking" is a track more interesting because it grows on a "healthy" Dark Gothic Metal structure! For a demo, I'd say it is pretty interesting... but otherwise... I wouldn't notice it! Either Power or Dark Metal... it would be about time to decide over! www.dark-reflections.de Rating: 0.79/1 (17.01)

DARZAMAT(POL)-"Oniriad" CD'03 (9 tracks, 42. 11 min)
(WOUNDED LOVE)
This is just another disappointment, another album I have waited with maximum interest but turned out to be in lack of any vigour. DARZAMAT is known as non-conventional band and throughout their two albums released a few years ago, they actually managed to shock everybody. There were many rumours that the band just split but here they are bringing up a very different album from what we actually listened to in their music so far. On the Gothic Metal scale, the Poles have brought various kinds of stylistic tricks, from Metal Rock to Jazz, Electro or Ambient. In a shy Ethereal note, the new album reveals new female vocals, rather more fragile and timid, modest clear male vocals (sometimes even annoying for the ear), comfortable tunes (perhaps a little bit too commercial), an engaging rhythm and a monotonous atmosphere. I'd say there is a track that makes a discordant note, "Elegy", as it has a folk core, lightly medieval tunes completed in a Gothic shape in a very peculiar and exquisite manner. Otherwise, it is an album that pleases the ears, easy to digest but with an overall sensation of insufficiency. Rating: 0.76/1 (16.05)

DAWN DESIREE(USA)-"Dancing, Dreaming, Longing" CD'04 (8 tracks, 42. 02 min)
(THE FOSSIL DUNGEON)



Dawn is the voice of a defunct Gothic Atmospheric Metal project, which got noticed thanks to a very Heavy execution. This very project is a very awkward mixture of Dark Wave, Atmospheric, and Electro-Pop with references to Ethno or Neo-Classic. The first tracks are very emotional, slow and with a meditative aura and the angelic voice with an ethereal piano are the main actors of the sound. The second part of the album insists on Electro implications with a more dynamic rhythm that actually shatters the whole concept of such music. The album is rather introspective even if sometimes attempts to reach too many musical territories... leaving behind a shade of confusion... at least this is my perception! I must say that Dawn's professional vocal abilities are amazing and so is that piano which elegant majestic aura is all around. Trust me... it is a beautiful digipack with an excellent artwork! www.dawndesiree.com www.fossildungeon.com Rating: 0.82/1 (01.03)

DEATH DIES(ITA)-"Product Of Hate" CD'03 (12 tracks, 44. 50 min)
(BLACK TEARS OF DEATH)
Ex-EVOL return with a second album, pretty much awaited by many fans since the band has a status of a cult one for the Italian Black Metal scene. If on the previous album there were here and there some modern influences, the new tracks completely abandoned any shade of atmospheric or rhythmic touch and the sound became extremely brutal, a Black/Thrash in old style based on force, rapidity and virtuosity. These musicians are very good with their instruments, something we all knew..., but I don't understand why they hurried to release such a simplistic and rather puerile album, at least as far as the conceptual aspect is regarded. If you desire for listening a sample of primitive aggressiveness you can confidently try this very material... if else, just press "skip"! www.deathdies.cjb.net Rating: 0.78/1 (30.11)

DEFILED(JAP)-"Divination" CD'03 (14 tracks, 36. 31 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)
Again brutal Death Metal...The Japans have reached the third album and this one is as linear and common as the previous ones. Nothing innovative, nothing original, just an infernal noise, howls, a sick atmosphere, maximum blast and... Death Metal again. It is a modest faded album! Rating: 0.78/1 (21.11)

DENSE VISION SHRINE(NOR)-"Litanies Of Desire" CD'03 (9 tracks, 56. 45 min)
(DRAGON FLIGHT)
If in ARCANE ART I had troubles in understanding the music... well, here I notice for the second time (after a bombastic debut) a great music for film, very dark and kind of a gothic drama... rated somewhere at Horror and Thriller category. Everything is instrumental, based on various effects, echoes and shadows and it is highly professional executed inducing an ambiguous mood but a fascinating and terrifying atmosphere as well! This material is even more introverted than the previous one and I think that, thanks to its mystical enthralling aura, it deserves all your attention, an audition in solitude, far away from mundane activities, worries or other feelings. This is a genuine sample of veritable Dark Ambient dedicated to all who adore COPH NIA, LUSTMORD or PROTAGONIST. Rating: 0.82/1 (16.11)

DIMENSION F3H(NOR)-"Reaping The World Winds" CD'03 (11 tracks, 59. 23 min)
(HAMMERHEART)



Probably what THE KOVENANT accomplished during the last couple of years has become a factual example for many. If LIMBONIC ART has been put under ice for good, well, Morfeus seemed to have decided to continue his activity throughout this new band, which is more atmospheric or avant-garde than the former. I'd say that the approach of Black Metal is now rather fresher more rhythmical, more Heavy and domestic, which means: more accessible! Therefore, rather on a KING DIAMOND structure (the backing vocals are pretty much similar!), full of entertaining keyboards and Space/Electro effects, Morfeus develops a modern Metal with both clear and screaming vocals, tribal/oriental influences, female vocals echo-like (Anette/MANDYLION), some interesting riffs and a puzzle-like drum machine. I'd say that all technical details connected with the recordings are of superlative so that this debut deserves all the credit and appreciation. Nesmoht's voice potential (ARCH NEMESIS) simply impresses while the gifted drum player, Stian (PAGAN'S MIND, TRIVIAL ACT), proves that battery can play sometimes the most important part inside the sound synergism, which by the way is one of first rate. Well, it is known that Morfeus initially pictured this project as a solo one and a non-Metal one...but it happened that the result was so much different. Well, I'd say we should stay tuned for the next material, which is about ready! www.dimensionf3h.com, Rating: 0.87/1 (20.09)

DIN UMBRA(ROM)-"Din Umbra" tape'03
(BESTIAL)
I haven't understood a thing! Exclusively dedicated to the Romanian audience, the four present here an original music...out of conventional patterns but pretty confusing for my poor ears! How do you picture the sound of a mixture between Psychedelic, Rock, Metal, Ambient and Industrial? Let's see: there are some commercial passages with clear vocals and extreme voices as well, a lot of noise and some violence! We have as well an ambient atmosphere with strange spooky lyrics and... that would be all! It is hard to frame the sound into a category or another and it is hard to describe it! Anyway, this is away too far from what I usually

review or promote! http://dinumbra.realnoise.net www.bestial.ro Rating: 0.72/1 (17.01)

DISMEMBER(SWE)-"The Imaginary Direction of Time" CD'04 (10 tracks, 38. 12 min)
(KARMAGEDDON)
Again Death Metal coming from these legendary musicians! Well, we talk here about their eighth album and it seems like they haven't changed a bit! I don't know if it is quite ok to overlook from an evaluative perspective as if so… I wouldn't understand why DISMEMBER still exists… since the new tracks are as old as the previous ones as far as the approach is regarded… and maybe as old as the ones conceived 15-16 years ago… It is just that now they are executed and mixed better. I have listened to the album twice and found nothing interesting! Only aggressiveness, violence and speed! I suppose that all the four years of silence shall be regarded in relation with the new album! But… after that… what kind of DISMEMBER albums will we prefer to listen to? Well, for me, only the first ones! In other terms, I guess you have no doubts… this is a first rate Death Metal! Rating: 0.80/1 (22.02)

DISSIMULATION(LIT)-"Maras" CD'02 (11 tracks, 39. 56 min)
(LEDO TAKAS)



Tadas is well known for his affinity for traditional but brutal Black Metal. After a good job with the excellent project, OBTEST, he released now the debut of these Lithuanians… a debut that follows a well promoted EP, "Miglose". It didn't strike me but I enjoyed the sound! Aggressive Black Metal (Blasphemous Traditional Black Metal they say), with plenty of violence in expression, explosive vocals and demented guitars, a brilliant battery… and nothing else. The band is pretty controversial because of the association with a Nazi movement but it seems all is just a rumor. Anyway, this is an album with an elegant design, a professional recoding and an exquisite execution… and this would be the way I would and my review. Well, if up to me, I'd say OBTEST is much closer to my heart… probably because the traditional elements are more obviously pointed out, while DISSIMULATION insists on old style Black Metal. www.ledo-takas.com Rating: 0.84/1 (02.12)

DIVISON ALPHA(FRA)-"Replika" CD'03 (16 tracks, 59. 10 min)
(HOLY)
Cyber Metal? Well, it is hard to describe the music of these French. I believe it is rather a club music where those Techno, Industrial, Wave or Gothic effects go together under the new technology umbrella so that the final outcome is of an artificial sound with weird vocals but featuring form time to time some warm shades reminding me of DEPECHE MODE. I think it is a little too much of a computer abuse in this music… at least for my taste, but I can see that this particular kind of sound awakes more and more interest in people's hearts, all over the Europe. The CD contains as well a video-clip of which I understood nothing. Rating: 0.78/1 (02.12)

DRACONIAN(SWE)-"Where Lovers Mourn" CD'03 (8 tracks, 52. 38 min)
(NAPALM)
Hard times this band had to experience so far! Although it was founded nine years ago, DRACONIAN has only last year signed with a label. Probably the waiting was worth it since Napalm is actually a target for each band which desires for promotion in the most professional manner. Dark Romantic Gothic Doom Metal with throaty male vocals and angelic female ones and that should be all about their style. To be more precise, it is a kind of earlier THEATRE OF TRAGEDY mixed with TRISTANIA and some shades of BESEECH as well having as backbone a contrasting concept, aggressiveness and a bombastic atmosphere as well. There is nothing new, nothing special but a pleasant audition. We can say that the first track, "The Cry Of Silence", is the most elaborated and complex with a length of 12 minutes. The other tracks are rather superficial, somehow "not-finished" and even boring from time to time. In a plastic description the Swedes' music would sound like this: a musty band willing to release a Gothic Metal album for some good years now and finally succeeding to see the dream come true. Unfortunately, the release was too much time delayed so that the album is just about to be "out of time and place". There are: abundant keyboards, flute tunes, violins, dynamic guitar, explosive drums and a clear accurate sound… I'd say that practically we have here the whole package a band would need to strike to Gothic Metal scene. It is obvious that the album was well taken care of both in conception and execution and the seven musicians' efforts were remarkable. It is a pity that the inspiration part is missing! However I consider this material a flourishing debut! Rating: 0.77/1 (18.09)

DRASTIQUE(ITA)-"Pleasureligion" CD'03 (7 tracks, 43. 53 min)
(MASTERPIECE)
After a small debut already forgotten, the Italians have changed both the name and line-up of the band so that in this trio formula (Mahavira/ex-ENSOPH, Chris and Fay), they try to step on TRISTANIA and SIRENIA's tracks or to follow other Gothic Black Metal versions. Well, featuring some LIMBONIC ART influences, the three musicians open up an atmospheric album based on keyboard/piano and heavy guitars! Another interesting part of the band is constituted in the vocals since both the inflections and contrasts gradation actually develops a nice narrative landscape (sometimes even opera-like) that preserves a certain authenticity to the sound. The drums parts are very simple, yet "modest" should be the most appropriate term and I must say neither the rhythms are too much of skilfulness. It seems to be an album pretty ok as far as technical details are regarded but in lack of expression and strength so that it would be on the first places on top. There is as well a harsh and dark cover for "Maria Magdalena"/SANDRA, a track I hardly recognized since the vocals are at least sinister! But I let you anyway the chance to explore how to dance this tune in DRASTIQUE version. www.drastique.com Rating: 0.80/1 (21.09)

DRUDKH(UKR)-"Forgotten Legends" CD'03 (4 tracks, 39. 26 min)
(SUPERNAL)
The members of HATE FOREST founded this project in 2002 and they already released their debut. Moreover, right at the beginning of this year they released the second album. But let's stick with the debut: amazing Depressive Black Metal in the style of all bands who come from No Color Records… or perhaps a different kind of SHINING! There are many influences from HATE FOREST and from HADES or BURZUM as well. This is an interesting album, in lack of too many new elements but very pleasing to the ear of someone who actually loves extreme sonorities, in old style. The musicians desire to keep their identities secrete… therefore do not hurry searching for interviews or else! Rating: 0.82/1 (06.01)

DWELLING(POR)-"Humana" CD'03 (9 tracks, 38. 52 min)
(EQUILIBRIUM)



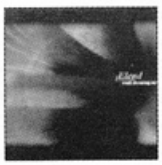
Ethereal Neo Classical of first class! It is just like a camera-music for connoisseurs! With a Heavy female voice and a calm but expressive violin…the three guitars develop an elaborated refined and magical sound. It is a continuance of Fredo's music but with Jazz shades and lots of influences of contemporaneous music. Nuno Roberto has founded this project in 1998, initially as a solo acoustic experience and then developed it to a quintet. He has a poor discography meaning he only released a MCD, "Moments", in 2001 until this very debut. I truly recommend you this album as relaxation is the state you often need and DWELLING really can help you reaching such right after the first tunes. www.equilibriummusic.com Rating: 0.85/1 (19.10)

EINHERJER(NOR)-"Blot" CD'03 (12 tracks, 60. 17 min)
(TABU)
This very band is one of the Viking Metal promoters and we can say that this new album keeps the same line! I have listened to the album for many times and I find it really good. Professional execution, good sound…all by the book! Unfortunately there is no sparkle for this album… no inspiration! Once we got used with materials such as "Aurora Borealis" or "Dragons Of the North", besides others like "Far Far North", "Odin Owns Ye" or "Norwegian Native Art", well I find difficult to appreciate a new album that has nothing intriguing to express. If it was to enter many more details, I'd say that the new tracks are closer, in sound, to the ones of "Far Far North". But we maybe don't have to be that criticizing because "Blot" still has some qualities: a refined material, full of atmosphere… where both guitars and keyboard play a high role. In other words, we have 60 minutes of Viking Metal that meets other styles as well, such as Heavy, Symphonic or Melodic Metal but I believe -sincerely- that they all could be compressed in 50 minutes as well and would have sound good as well. And I that this because there are some confusing superimposed passages extended absolutely without reason… yet who knows, maybe it is better to have where from to cut than not to! I expected a lot much more from EINHERJER, at least a healthier replica, and a bomb-album ready to preserve their inherited mixture of Nordic Metal. It wasn't like that but it was worth to listen to it. I think you should try as well as you won't have any regrets! Hot news: the band decided to split-up! Rating: 0.80/1 (19.10)

EISHEILIG(GER)-"Die Garten Des Herrn" CD'03 (11 tracks, 49. 00 min)
(NAPALM)
Fellows, I really am confused not understanding what the hell this band wants to play!? Should it be Dark, Melancholic Rock, Gothic and Wave? Besides the voice, which owns both impressing expressiveness and a unique tonality, the rest of instruments don't come out to be noticed in a way or another. It is, if you like, a kind of TYPE O NEGATIVE, but with German lyrics, medium keyboard (nothing to impress!) and simplistic guitars. I find it better than the debut, but insufficiently arranged for a picky fan, for example! www.eishilig.de Rating: 0.74/1 (01.11)

EISMALSOTT(GER)-"Best Before: Spring" 7"EP'04 (2 tracks, 13. 45 min)
(BLACK ATTACK)
Florin Dammasch (ENID) explores a new realm throughout a new musical project, more dynamic orientated towards Black Metal but in SUMMONING way! I wouldn't say it is that melodious but nevertheless there are some very slow atmospheric passages with recitals and intonations… I would say it has some roots in ENID as well but, generally speaking, we can talk about aggressive screaming vocals, fast riffs, a connected battery and great violence. Well, the rhythmic gradation confuses me! Nevertheless I noticed two complex and much elaborated tracks getting over various musical styles outlining thus a sound pretty OK. Important is to lay an eye on their debut… as it might surprise many of you! Rating: 0.81/1 (26.02)

ELEND(AUT/FRA)-"Winds Devouring Men" CD'03 (11 tracks, 65. 36 min)
(PROPHECY)



I must confess I was shocked! There was not a single moment in my life to come to the thought that these two talented musicians would come to express Dark art in an Ambient shape… especially since they had released some Dark Symphonic albums before that! Well, keeping some faded symphonic remains, ELEND comes into fans attention with 11 magnificent new tracks, full of mystery and meditation. Vocals are clear now and the sopranos excellently interweave while the synthetic sounds preserve a certain charm to this material. This is just a different ELEND, radically changed, a new ELEND who proves that music has millions faces… infinite ones, I'd say! As far as the execution is regarded… I have nothing but praising words! There is a major negative point: if you don't have the right mood, there are some "chances" for this album to be rather too monotonous with no colour… no shape! Rating: 0.88/1 (27.11)

ELENIUM(FIN)-"For Giving-For Getting" CD'03 (9 tracks, 41. 00 min)
(RAGE OF ACHILLES)
I have heard about this band in various occasions, I even received a demo CD, a few years ago, with few tracks but a pleasant sound! For this material we have a classical Melodic Death Metal, in Nordic style (maybe more Swedish than else!) often invested with Progressive, Atmospheric or Heavy Metal elements. Vocals oscillate between extreme and clear clean ones; the keyboard is in a rhythmic tandem with the guitars' riffs while the percussion is nothing but an accurate one. The whole material is in lack of originality, innovation… becoming thus just a different kind of SENTENCED, DARK TRANQUILITY or IN FLAMES. I pleasantly have listened to the album but it'convinced me not to be any special or different. Maybe you'll get convinced…www.rageofachilles.com Rating: 0.80/1 (21.11)

ELIS(LI)-"God's Silence, Devil's Temptation" CD'03 (11 tracks, 47. 43 min)
(NAPALM)
Sabine Dunser is known especially from her presence in ERBEN DER SCHOPFUNG, beside the famous Oliver Falk (WELTENBRAND). This time she has her own band but following the same line and, naturally, the female voice is the main feature of ELIS sound. Based on a commercial and digestible Gothic Metal, ELIS insists on electronic elements but using an entertaining and pretty Heavy Metal background. It is a nice album almost danceable and with many Pop trends and from time to time it almost reminds us it has some roots in extreme Metal, especially because of aggressive male vocals (luckily seldom featured in the tracks) that tend to "provoke anger" to those listeners who enjoy melodiousness. I think there is about much of tom-tom, bombastic sound, an exceptional presentation, a satisfactory result but definitely not a great one! Since it is both in English and German, ELIS might reach two different kinds of listeners but it might as well to touch none! www.elis.li Rating: 0.80/1 (04.11)

ENDRAUM(GER)-"es ist ein augen blick…" CD'03 (15 tracks, 68. 41 min)
(IROND)



Well, this is a cult band for Dark Wave scene, an excellent replica to JOY DIVISON. It all began with CRUX ANSATA, in 1986. Then an intense activity followed under Danse Macabre and Weisser Herbst labels. This material is nothing else but the recording of a live performance that took place at the beginning of this year in Moscow, event I definitely am sorry to have missed. Now, when I listen to this material, I sincerely regret my lack of interest for this concert! Anyway, it is difficult to explain what these Germans play, but I think it is a kind of Melancholic, Romantic, Dark, and Wave…all in German! There is a bombastic synth… and finally a magnificent sound! This material is recommended to anyone! Hovi and Roman indeed are some talented musicians and I assure you won't be disappointed if listening to this product! www.endraum.net www.irond.ru Rating: 0.88/1 (10.11)

ENID(GER)-"Gradwanderer" CD'04 (9 tracks, 62. 16 min)
(CODE666)
Absolutely in an elegant manner, Martin's band has succeeded to gain a great big deal of attention during its six years existence even if the sound was placed somehow at the limit where aggressive meets melodic. Their last album is the most poetic and probably most romantic one! Less Metallic, focused on atmosphere/ballad, an affectionate piano with a healthy Classic background, a cantata baritone voice, flute effects and a theatrical atmosphere and from time to time there are some passages with melodic guitars, which unfortunately seem to be rather too noisy, well, with all of that ENID proves again that bands like EMPYRIUM or DVKE were and forever will be guiding marks for such sound, a very expressive sound as a matter of fact! I find very difficult to characterize such music because solely a regular ENID listener could understand where Metal ends and Classic begins! For all old time fans of Metal styles, the album might be overviewed as avant-garde, experimental or simply one without any specific clue or guiding line… It may appear thus as a sum of diverse influences belonging to a wide range of musical styles, which may please but not impress! Rating: 0.82/1 (26.02)

ENSLAVED(NOR)-"Below The Light" CD'03 (7 tracks, 46. 19 min)
(OSMOSE/THE END)
It was absolutely natural for a band that successfully activates for more than a decade to come up with new elements in its style. In the Norwegians' case, "Monumension" represented the album that actually gave deep thoughts to all involved in Black Metal scene since all Non-Metal potencies practically threw the fans off the scent of what Metal was and fascinated them as well. Well, the new album insists now on that complex Avant-Garde Progressive direction fluctuating between melodic epic tunes and brutal ones. However, it is a Black, Thrash, Heavy Metal… in a genuine new profile in which the rhythm's ruptures seem to rule the sound, the various vocals keep shocking from a passage to another while the other instruments make confusion in the listener's mind. Probably there will be great reviews for this album and mostly thanks to the innovation it brings… Up to my viewpoint, I consider that this new ENSLAVED album actually succeeds not to accurately outline the new musical approach so that, in the most personal way, I think we witness an album of transition for the Norwegian musicians' history. The performance and the recording quality are as usual of first class. 0.80/1 (18.09)

ENSOPH(ITA)-"Opus Dementiae (per speculum et in aenigmate" CD'04 (10 tracks, 45. 47 min)
(CRUZ DEL SUR)
A better characterization than the one made by the label itself… I actually couldn't find: "10 tracks of pure unorthodox Gothic Metal avant-gardism that celebrates a perfect mixture of powerful Electro-Industrial elements, sick and disturbed orchestrations, unconventional extreme Metal and a huge range of vocal deliriums as you have never hear before." I think it is the most complex material The Italians have achieved so far and thus it is as well pretty knotty… less romantic more technical and experimental. This is a weirdness conceived to walk us through an extremely various universe… at least stylistically speaking…and I include here "Sophia's Fall" remix made by B. Kramm/DAS ICH. www.ensoph.it Rating: 0.80/1 (11.02)

ENTHRAL(NOR)-"Subterranean Movement" CD'03 (8 tracks, 47. 32 min)
(DISPLEASED)
This was another promising band (8-9 years ago!) that managed not to sell the music in a proper way. If we take in consideration that their debut was released by the same label that released DIMMU BORGIR, Hot Records to be precise, then you should imagine such a qualitative Black Metal approach they had! One year later they released a new long-long album (over 70 minutes) and from that day…complete silence followed. In the end of year 2002, Displeased announced ENTHRAL with a new material and here they are, coming up this summer with the third material. The four Nordics put across an intelligent mixture of Nordic Black Metal, Heavy Metal, Folk Music, featuring as well some de Atmospheric Doom shades. I think it is notable for the keyboard part to be performed again by Stian Aarstad, ex DIMMU BORGIR member and thus e can still meet bombastic elements and multiple strains. If we have a critical overview, this album, even if well structured and arranged, is nothing… but one of dozens Black Metal ones, pretty similar with what usually Nordic bands perform. It is a pity that after so many years of activity ENTHRAL succeeds not to outline a proper sound, something which actually is a vital element for nowadays success! http://listen.to/enthral Rating: 0.78/1 (02.11)

EPHEL DUATH(ITA)-"The Painter's Palette" CD'03 (98 tracks, 46. 33 min)
(ELITIST/EARACHE)
The world has turned upside down! What the hell is this?!... Black Metal, Fusion, Hardcore, Progressive Metal, Jazz and even Blues! Wow, this is too complex for my actual state! I understand that the new line-up formula encloses pretty famous musicians but not from the Metallic area, that's for sure; the sound is of high quality, well conceived and interpreted… but super-knotty! I have listened to the album for a couple of times and I still didn't get the idea! The acoustic trumpet, rather too soft guitars, a ravishing drum machine, abundant tunes… nothing resembles to what we knew EPHEL DUATH to be! If you like AGHORA, then you could reach almost the same satisfaction with this new product! In my opinion, Jazz measurement is the real accent of the new sound while the multitude of non-Metal loads simply outlines a very different EPHEL DUATH and definitely out of the Metallic sphere or maybe solely from the noise perspective. The CD includes as well a professional multimedia presentation; therefore, all curious people can actually surf through the information they might require. Davide Tiso proves to be the band's heart and soul since Giuliano's depart and what he has done here outshines the clichés' dimension. Succinctly, I haven't understood a thing if we have in mind a Metallic viewpoint. If we just take the sound and no other prejudices in mind, then I do believe the album should certainly feature reviews in other kind of magazines whose target is definitely larger than Kogaionon's. No other comments! Rating: 0.85/1 (16.05)

EROS NECROPSIQUE(FRA)-"Crises de Lucidite" CD'03 (8 tracks, 55. 06 min)
(ADIPOCERE)



This is an original refined music, full of charm and poetry, it is a Poetic Symphonic Dark of first class, situated somewhere at the coalescence of Classic and Neo-Classic. Olivier Clavier brings up, after almost five years, a new opus and the third material seems to be the most profound of all. With a superb opera female voice, tragic male vocals, percussion/programming supervised by Roland (ELEND), Olivier impresses us with an inspired music for which words are not enough to describe it. Therefore, if you are attracted to the experimental frame of music, you can have a try with this new album as it is indeed an authentic manifestation of dark musical poetry. And, by the way, stay calm, there are on the way two new albums, which are already elaborated! Rating: 0.89/1 (19.10)

EVERSINCE(SWI)-"Fight The Elements" CD'03 (6 tracks, 36. 02 min)
This is a very stylish demo in a Digipack version! Following a Dark Metal path, since five years ago, the six Swiss released now a sample of modern atmospheric Metal with deep roots in bands like CRADLE OF FILTH, IN FLAMES and even MY DYING BRIDE. This is a mixture of Heavy, Black and Death Metal in a grandiloquent version, with abundant keyboard and an aggressive voice. During the six tracks there are to be listened some other instruments than the traditional ones such as percussions or violin and even a shy female voice can be heard here and there. I think it is remarkable for a demo to have such a nice professional booklet and such a clear recording. They are not the best but neither the last in line… and I think that my rating means a lot! www.eversince.net Rating: 0.82/1 (17.11)

EWIGKEIT(UK)-"Land Of Fog" CD'02 (9 tracks, 39. 50 min)
(METAL AGE)
This is a surprising solo project… Mr. Fog is a real talented musician! After almost 10 years of activity, the British project numbers solely three albums and this is the later. There is one thing I can't explain to myself, how did it happen that no big labels were interested in EWIGKEIT! And I refer now especially at this last album! The declared style seems to be Epic Pagan Folk Metal, but if it is up to my appreciation I'd say that Mr. Fog performs something more complex, a mixture of Eclectic Black, Atmospheric and Progressive Metal. The sound is professional and the instruments sound amazingly great! It is incredible how a single man can come out with such great music… here there are some different tracks, from aggressive ones in a modern Black Metal version to lent atmospheric and with psychedelic shades ones. "Interlude", for example, reminds me in an accurate frame of SHIP OF FOOLS. The keyboard is the basic instrument while the voice simply emphasizes the

grave note of the sound. The last two tracks are merely stupefying…both guitars and keyboard run through various styles replicating cosmic effects in a range from PINK FLOYD to IN THE WOODS… and there is a special atmospheric melancholic and really nostalgic aura you cannot miss… Even the voice is different here, warm and comfortable. Should I mention in addition that originality is EWIGKEIT's fundamental feature? Well, I actually am really impressed! Rating: 0.86/1 (22.09)

FALKENBACH(GER)-"Ok Nefina Tysvar Ty" CD'03 (7 tracks, 40. 00 min)
(NAPALM)



Even if we take solely the name of this project and we should show respect for them and moreover, this third release is really a precious jewel. It took almost 6 years since Vratyas' previous material was released but I assure you it wasn't in vain as this album is actually by far the most elaborated and inspired production of his. With the benefit of irreproachable recording and mixing, the new tracks continues the same line of Epic Hymnal Atmospheric Folk Metal but this time the clear vocals along with war-like choirs, frames of acoustic guitars and Icelandic traditional rhythms (we could even say Viking tunes!) simply lead to a fantastic state of maximum adrenaline! Though it is a very melodic outstanding album of an exquisite elegance and no mistake! Since I am a fan of the album "Twilight Of The Gods" (BATHORY), I can assure you that the new FALKENBACH has just broken my heart in two and thousands small frames… just because the sound is so much resembling to Quorthon's! From another point of view, this is the first album featuring all three musicians of VINDSVAL, a project under SKALDIC ART label, which belongs to Vratyas! If I wasn't clear enough, I'll tell it again and directly: my true opinion is that this album can equal a nuclear bomb… as atmosphere! This is a piece of collection! www.falkenbach.de Rating: 0.89/1 (18.09)

FINAL SELECTION(GER)-"Anti Hero" CD'03 (11 tracks, 55. 44 min)
(BLACK FLAMES)
It is a really a mystery how this band activates for more than 10 years in the Electro field and I haven't heard of it so far! Well it is true they only released one album since then, Immortal Gift, but this is not an explanation, especially since the sound is indeed excellent! The voice reminds me perfectly of DEPECHE MODE or even MESH. If it was for me to come with my feet on the ground, I'd say that DIARY OF DREAMS would be another band that could be a source of inspiration for the two Germans. So, in other words: Synth Pop, Electro, Darkwave, programs computer…a synthetic sound abundant in melancholic passages, full of harmony and atmosphere, bombastic and rhythmic, dynamic and striking… that would be a possible characterization to define FINAL SELECTION music! I truly recommend it! www.final-selection.de Rating: 0.84/1 (04.11)

FINNTROLL(FIN)-"Visor om Slutet" CD'03 (11 tracks, 32. 41 min)
(SPIKEFARM)
After the unhappy events that occurred lately in the band (a member died while the band's leader had various problems) it was expected to have released spectacular material in a short time. Thus, we can enjoy here 11 tracks, for the most part acoustic following traditional riffs and folk lines with an epic visionary aura and some Viking echoes of a certain charm for the sound. It is, if you like, something experimental without dynamic or definite strength, just like a fairy tale told in a discreet rustic manner very pleasing to the ear. www.finntroll.net Rating: 0.71/1 (23.07)

FINNUGOR(HUN/FIN)-"Death Before Dawn" CD'03 (10 tracks, 53. 33 min)
(ADIPOCERE)
After a debut album well received, Gabriel Wolf and Nikolai Stalhammar keep on following the Black Gothic Metal experience with a second album, as complicated and diverse in influences as the previous. In order to reach a complete occurrence, they invited Attila Csihar (TORMENTOR/ABORYM) as a special guest and a female vocalist. Their sound encounters many stages, from brutal and primitive ultra-fast ones to medieval, folk, symphonic or melodic ones. Everything is pictured in a Dark underground note, with violent screaming vocals. As far as the concept is regarded, I'd say this is an interesting music but as a whole, I find the album not well-conceived/elaborated since the sum of all influences included here… is simply uninspiring mixed. We can enjoy as well a videoclip even if recorded in precarious conditions. Perhaps for all the fans of traditional Black Metal this experience might present a lot much more interest than what it meant for me. http://finnugor.cjb.net Rating: 0.79/1 (30.11)

FOGLAND(ROM)-"Znaman" CD'02 (7 tracks, 44. 13 min)
(RADICAL CONFLICT)
There are in the Romanian underground some musicians who activate for quite some years now… some with great results… some with less than that. Fulmineos' case (from ARGUS) belongs to the last category since he didn't succeed so far to get through with none of his materials he released in the past years. What you could hear within here is a stylistic weirdness… something I never listened to until now. On a Poetic meditative and calm Ambient Folk background a simple and formal female voice intertwines with some screams in the style of old BURZUM! The guitars' sound is indeed primitive; there is an abundant but simplistic keyboard while the battery says nothing at all! There are some atmospheric passages, decently conceived, some folk ones, some Black Metal frames, all melted in a precarious harmony but as a whole I can only say that the mixing part finally generated a sound labeled as primitive and even embarrassing! If looking into a different direction, I might say that this is an album in which they actually gave their best and the efforts are noticeable even if there is a great lack: professionalism! If we only think at this as a demo, then with some tolerance we could appreciate it above the medium of what our undersized autochthonous underground promotes! We can enjoy a nice booklet and thus we may say that this product could wake the interest of those fans who still live the nostalgia of musical past times! I understand the future album will include as well some lyrics in at least six languages! Let's wait and see what's next! fulmineos@yahoo.com, conflict@k.ro Rating: 0.78/1 (11.01)

FOREST STREAM(RUS)-"Tears Of Mortal Solitude" CD'03 (9 tracks, 68. 58 min)
(ELITIST)
Black Doom of depths! How talented can be these young musicians! Even if the band was founded in 1995, they have a poor discography. I remember I actually wrote two eulogistic reviews for their two demos, "Snowfall" and "Last Season Purity", in previous issues of Kogaionon. I wasn't surprised therefore by the contract they signed with Earache since the three musicians if truth be told do approach a complex grave and outstanding musical style. I think their music is situated somewhere between the British Doom of '90's (MY DYING BRIDE, ANATHEMA) and Nordic Black Metal. Unfortunately for them, such style was in preferences top… ten years ago! For today… I doubt there would be many faithful listeners to such sonorities: Atmospheric Doom/Death Black Metal, but who knows…? Rating: 0.79/1 (12.10)

FORGOTTEN TOMB(ITA)-"Springtime Depression" CD'03 (6 tracks, 46. 48 min)
(ADIPOCERE)



If only I remember what Dark Depressive Metal bands used to be ages ago! SHINING, for example, is a fortunate case in which the same strong and "healthy" underground line is preserved despite all musical fashions or else and the sound is weird and really nocturnal. Not too far from this band is FT with a lent and atmospheric Black Metal performed in a duality of sinister and charming tunes. From a Misanthropic Sick Black Metal started four years ago. Morbid's band has changed the track especially after an acclaimed debut, "Songs To Leave" (KATATONIA+BURZUM+DOLORIAN), and turned to a weird lent suicidal-depressive, really pessimistic and grave tone: depressed angry and ugly vocals, prolonged guitar solos, drums in cadenza, lugubrious atmosphere. To be more precise, we can talk about a sick mixture of Dark, Doom and Black Metal. I really liked this material even if there is nothing new or bold about it. But there is still my nostalgia for WINTER which actually "affects" my judgement. I find interesting that the album was recorded in Tommy Tagtgren's studio (just imagine the mixing!) while the drum part belonged to Wedebrand (ex-SHINING). I recommend it solely to those who know to appreciate Black Metal in a classical way. www.forgottentomb.com Rating: 0.84/1 (19.09)

FORMS OF THINGS UNKNOWN(USA)-"Cross Purposes" CD'03 (5 tracks, 29. 11 min)
(PANAXIS)
Here we have plenty of talented musicians and one of them is Ferrara Brain Pan, a veteran of an unknown scene for those who may browse the book of Metal or Gothic accessories. He can be identified with some weird projects starting with '70's and his musical palette includes Dark or Ambient echoes (23 DEGREES, DARMSTADT PHARMACY), Noise (BOYD RICE), Goth (BAD ALCHEMY) as well as the legendary FAUST. In this very case, this project orientation swings between Dark Ambient, Medieval, Rock and even Jazz. Thus, we can hear a variety of instruments such as clarinet, saxophone, flutes and other musical accessories for blowing beside sopranos, baritone… It is a real weirdness… an experiment but definitely… an interesting one! Well, it actually has no possible connection with the musical field I write about… for many years now… but it is interesting. www.formsofthingsunknown.com Rating: 0.82/1 (28.11)

FORSAKEN(MAL)-"Iconoclast" MCD'02 (4 tracks, 34. 27 min)
(GOLDEN LAKE)
What a great misfortune for this band to come from a small country! Although founded in 1990, the five musicians have released so far the debut in 1997 and this very MCD. It is a pity and a sad thing to see how a first rate Doom Metal is ignored on Metal scene. Therefore, I tell you, all fans of bands like ST. VITUS, COUNT RAVEN, CATHEDRAL or SOLITUDE AETURNUS, by all means, do not miss this MCD! It is a genuine sample of old Metal with prolonged guitar solos, strange keyboard tunes, placed into the sound solely to create a sober atmosphere, clear clean voice (with progressive touches) and some echoes of female vocals followed by a slow rhythmic battery. Although it brings nothing new, FORSAKEN proves that Doom Metal spirit of 15-20 years ago is still alive! And for such attainment, they have gathered all my respect! http://forsaken_malta.tripod.com Rating: 0.85/1 (17.01)

FORTID(ICE)-"Voluspa Part I/Thor's Anger" CD'03 (7 tracks, 44. 35 min)
(NO COLOURS)
It is incredible how inspired could be this talented musician on his name, Eldur. His background started to grow ten years ago when THULE project was brought up to life. And then the veritable "bomb", POTENTIAM, followed. Not so long ago, a new project, CURSE, began to gather many fans and so we can say that Eldur has no moment of pause. FORTID is a solo project that attempts to merge the old Black Metal style with traditional Viking elements and I think both the symphonic, bombastic touch and the aggressive, brutal underground one are on the same level of importance! Here from it is initiated a first part of a trilogy and there is no way for this material not to enchant the fans of first rate Black Metal. Perhaps not the mixing is the key element of the album/sound but it is important for you to listen to this music and to see how this guy manages to put into light a kind of music that does no longer exist. I recommend it for its conceptual manner of sketching a magnificent Black Metal with no other modern crap influences. Rating: 0.84/1 (14.12)

FRAGILE HOLLOW(FIN)-"Efete Mind" CD'03 (12tracks, 45. 00 min)
(AVANTGARDE)
I remember that two years ago I received a MCD in a digipack format and its music sounded surprisingly good for a material released throughout personal financial resources. By that time the band's

name was PROPHET and I was really curious to find out if Aleksi's team would succeed to sign with a serious label. Well, time went by and I haven't herd of them until Roberto sent me this very material and… right after the first tunes… my first thought lead me to PROPHET. Well, well, the band indeed changed its name and not only… the luck as well… and everything sounds so optimistic…! Everything… BUT their music! A very melodious Gothic Atmospheric Metal is what they play and there are some obvious references to bands like KATATONIA, ANATHEMA, HIM, TO/DIE/FOR or even newer such as DIVERCIA. The clear voice is accompanied by a bombastic keyboard and they bring you to a comfortable state of mind. Despite these praising words, I must say that beside very good tracks…there are as well some modest ones and it gives a sensation that this album is rather a compilation than a material well gathered together in 12 sequences. I am sure that the second material will take care of this inconvenient and I have found out it actually is already conceived. Anyway, this was a pleasant surprise even if the most devoted Metal fans might say that the Finns prefer Disco Pop instead of else… Rating: 0.82/1 (07.12)

FROST(UK)-"Talking To God" CD'03 (9 tracks, 44. 34 min)
(THE END/RAGE OF ACHILLES)
After a pale monotonous debut, "Cursed Again", the three come back with a new sample of aggressive Necro Black Metal with two sick angry voices and a sound oscillating between a Norwegian atmosphere and a weird distorted world… Try to imagine a traditional DARK THRONE blended into a dimension of twisted knotty necro effects. I think that from time to time there are rhythms reminding me of the immortal BATHORY or some clear opera voices shocking my ear, which actually during the musical journey got used solely with noisy linear sequences. Probably this is a fine experiment to be tasted by all fans of unconventional Black Metal. www.filthyblackshit.tk Rating: 0.79/1 (11.02)

FROZEN SHADOWS(CAN)-"Hantises" CD'04 (8 tracks, 50. 46 min)
(HOLY)
I don't find quite inspired the choice Holy made in this particular case! Although at the third material, the Canadian band seems to be pretty common and linear and this violent fast Black Metal has nothing interesting to point out! The voices are rather too aggressive and the guitar riffs insist on a primitive sound… there was nothing else to have noticed in addition. From BURZUM to DARK THRONE… this is their universe! Modest, limited, not at all original… but with a great execution! But is it enough? Rating: 0.78/1 (20.02)

GOTHICA(ITA)-"The Cliff Of Suicide" CD'03 (10 tracks, 43. 06 min)
(CMI)
After a debut with a great feedback in media spheres, the Italians return with a compact album, now more experimental than before, in a better shape and more melodious than the previous material. There is a strong similitude with DEAD CAN DANCE and the female vocals seem to have been improved. The choral arrangements sound better and so it can be said about the male vocals that interfere from time to time. It is not a remarkable album but I find it much better than the debut. The Gothic part obviously feathers the Ambient, Ethereal or Wave progressions. You can enjoy as well a video clip in which the stone of despair, the seashores and some other fatidic images so much outline the suicide idea. DCD and ATARAXIA fans have plenty of reasons to be glad of such appearance because GOTHICA tries to maintain alive a direction of this sort. www.gothicaHomepage.cjb.net Rating: 0.77/1 (28.06)

GRAVELAND(POL)-"The Fire Of Awakening" CD'03 (5 tracks, 46. 52 min)
(NO COLOURS)
Rob Darken is a vivid legend for the Polish Black Metal scene and his involvement in such sonorities is out of any possible doubt. After more than ten years of activity in GRAVELAND, Rob returns with a conceptual album, which has the merit of reminding us of old "Immortal pride" or "Thousand Swords". If I need to be critical over this, I'd say that the new compositions have nothing new to present and everything is just what once BATHORY already was. If I have to compare it with the previous materials, I must say that GRAVELAND brings now more complex sequences, longer ones, rather based on keyboard and with a more aggressive voice (but average this time). All in all, I think we should take this album as an authentic sample of Black Metal, not compromised yet by all fashionable elements of today's trends… and although it makes use of a bombastic synth it still succeeds in maintaining that mystical dark note. Rating: 0.81/1 (14.12)

GRAVEWORM(AUT/ITA)-"Engraved In Black" CD'03 (9 tracks, 42. 16 min)
(NUCLEAR BLAST)
Melodic Black Metal in line! Nothing interesting, nothing special… maybe one single Celtic traditional track, which actually has nothing in common with the rest of the tracks! I think that those CRADLE OF FILTH clones continue to live well approaching the same stylistic manner with linear screaming voice, extremely fast riffs, never-ending battery and an abundant keyboard (this time somehow more intelligently used than in times before…). I couldn't say I was disappointed but neither that I would carry it in my mind for long time…! I must say, all is executed in a professional way and pretty seriously but I am afraid this is not sufficient for a band to walk the same road Cradle started 10 years ago…! Perhaps it is… solely if the purpose is to listen to another first rate Black Metal album… but what about originality, gentlemen? To copy in an elegant manner might be a merit but definitely not recognition! It is a pity for this album didn't appear 10 years ago! Most certainly it must have been quite a shock for Black Metal scene… Anyway… who knows what today Black fans might prefer?! Rating: 0.80/1 (14.02)

HAMMERS OF MISFORTUNE(USA)-"The August Engine" CD'03 (7 tracks, 44. 26 min)
(CRUZ DEL SUR MUSIC)
John Cobbett (AMBER ASYLUM, SLOUGH FEG) is the one who hide behind this band, which until no longer ago used to be called UNHOLY CADAVER. The Americans' second album has to offer a complex Metal, full of Heavy Metal frames and even Non-Metal ones, with knotty intertwines and Progressive rhythms, clear vocals (both male and female ones)… sometimes too reedy for a style which is desired to be extreme. In fact, if I think twice this music can be all but extreme and it would rather be in the tone of bands such as MEGADETH, METALLICA, IRON MAIDEN… but with modern Metallic breath. It is a successful interpretation but which, unfortunately, impresses me not as it traces a too shiny sound for my tastes! www.cruzdelsurmusic.com Rating: 0.73/1 (12.01)

HANDFUL OF HATE(ITA)-"Vicecrown" CD'03 (9 tracks, 35. 01 min)
(CODE666)
Regretfully I must say that Code666 choice wasn't the best this time, at least as far as I am concerned. Perhaps, financially speaking, it may have logic but, up to me, the Italians' music simply doesn't say anything. The label's characterization is: MARDUK mixed with ANGELCORPSE. So, this should be simple and clear: ultra-aggressive and fast Black Death Metal with ravishing riffs, demonic vocals and an explosive battery. It is an inferno in true meaning of word but nothing else! Although this is the third album in more than 10 years of activity on Metal scene, the Italian band has nothing interesting to express while the musical message is just one of anger and virtuosity and I think it is a way too limited and simplistic for this millennium!!! www.handfulofhate.com Rating: 0.74/1 (01.11)

HATE FOREST(UKR)-"Purity" CD'03 (7 tracks, 44. 38 min)
(SUPERNAL)
Starting with 1995 there were many written reviews about this band but, despite of such, the Ukrainians are not exactly eager to agree with interviews or disclosing any other details about them. Declared descendant of Slavic mythology, with obvious references in Nietzsche's philosophy, the guys bring up here a first rate Elitist Black Metal with Grim, Fast, Cold and Epic valences as well. It is a Black Metal in old style reminding me of the Nordic band, HADES, very well elaborated and in a complete harmony. Right after a first audition, I realized that sometimes… even a music which has nothing original in…may create a certain state of mind for the listener. Sincerely speaking… this music turned me back in time… to a period when to set churches on fire in Norway… was just about to become a fashion while Black Metal didn't reach yet the status of a mass phenomenon. Those extreme vocals have their charm and so is the drum machine which is continuous in the background… not to mention about that primitive approach of the guitars… It is all great! This album has no chance but to enchant… all the fans who adore classic Nordic Metal… in lack of special effects or other modern touches… such as keyboard or female vocals! Excellent! www.supernalmusic.com Rating: 0.84/1 (06.01)

HIMINBJORG(FRA)-"Golden Age" (CD'03 7 tracks, 38. 43 min)
(ADIPOCERE)
Disappointment! After three successful albums released by Red Stream Zahaah comes back with a different formula both in line up and concept. Therefore, what was once an intelligent Viking Black Metal invested with Ambient echoes becomes now a Black Metal with common pagan and aggressive shades. It is just a small difference in the voice's inflections that suggests me not to confound HIMINBJORG with thousands such bands! I don't know what happened with these French musicians but their new album didn't touch me…. at all! I guess there is nothing wrong with the execution but solely with that it is a little hard to preserve the fans' respect and interest. I'd say we'd rather forget about this album and better hope for the next one to be inspired. Rating: 0.76/1 (18.10)

ILLNATH(DEN)-"Cast Into Fields Of Evil Pleasure" CD'03 (9 tracks, 39. 35 min)
(WORLD CHAOS)
FLAGELLATION was the initial name of the band, in 1997, and after many changes in the line up, they came to release the debut at the Japanese label. I don't think I could find there a better or more accurate clone to CRADLE OF FILTH! I'd say that the melodic part of the entertaining Black Metal seems to be more insistent and there is a real picture of various spicy sequences (abundant keyboard, female vocals, choral echoes), which cannot do else but to shock the fans of extreme music. There is much colour in the booklet as well, full of sparkling elements, therefore, there is about Majestic Black Metal in superlative notes! Well… as far as originality is concerned, I must say that the Danes are pretty poor… like many other bands in the actual Metal scene. For a debut, I must say, you should definitely listen to it! www.world-chaos.com www.illnath.dk Rating: 0.79/1 (29.06)

IMPALED NAZARENE(FIN)-"All That You Fear" CD'03 (13 tracks, 42. 50 min)
(OSMOSE/THE END)
From a certain point of view, it is better for The Finns to have left behind experiments and to have returned to both aggressiveness and rapidity that once made them famous! On the other hand, the sound is rather linear and pretty common and there are no new elements to make a difference! Yet when we talk about the eighth album we ask ourselves: what would they possibly come up with? Therefore, here they come with: first rate Black/Thrash Metal with plenty of Heavy Metal influences and excellent guitar riffs! It probably is a perfect album for the adepts of this style! And I find it natural since no one can contest their professionalism! www.impnaz.com Rating: 0.80/1 (20.01)

IN THE WOODS...(NOR)-"Live At The Caledonienhall" DCD'03 (20tracks, 145. 44 min)
(KARMAKOSMETIX/PROPHECY)

This life brought me plenty of moments of regretting things I did or I actually hadn't chance to do and amongst such I can number the fact I couldn't go to the farewell concert of these fantastic musicians! What can I tell you about almost three hours of music otherwise you all know (except 2-3 tracks), which in a live performance has a different expression?

There is no point to say that many tunes are so much different from the studio version and so are the vocals or that some tracks, which used to be brutal come out in an altered silhouette… because it would be no good and understood to be like that. If this music fascinated you once then I believe that you shouldn't miss this release for your collection! I feel it is my duty to inform you which formula was IN THE WOODS… on the evening of 29th December 2000: Mista Tranzit (voc), C:M Botteri (bass), X-Botteri (g), A. Kobro (dr), Christer A. Cederberg (g), Oddvar A:M (g), Bjorn (g), Synne (voc), Stein (bass). Through "Closing In" track, Jan Transit actually features a farewell to the fans and obviously in many languages! But why don't you try to listen to it live? The CD is worth all the money if we mention that you might enjoy as well (as a bonus) a compilation of bands close to IN THE WOODS… such as STILLE OPPROR, TRANSIT, NAERVAER or HUGE BROWN. IN THE WOODS… are dead-long live Karmakosmetix! www.karmakosmetix.com (22.09)

INHEPSIE(FRA)-"Oracle" CD'03 (8 tracks, 45. 57 min)
(HAR/SACRAL)
This duet is in the same proportion both weird and confusing! It is a kind of Atmospheric Metal governed by a warm female voice with opera inflections. Her voice reminds me of THE GATHERING but I think that having the lyrics in French might be a nice step to meet an original proper sound. We have here elegant relaxing guitars, a melancholic synth, discreet effects and all in all we can speak about a romantic aura with meditative touches and a peaceful pleasing sound. I'd say it is not a modern Metal cliché but neither something of a strong personality! Probably it is an experimental material, pale, of underground and in lack of strength. Rating: 0.74/1 (09.01)

JAMISON YOUNG(AUS)-"Shifting Sands Of A Blue Car" CD'03 (12 tracks, 58. 43 min)
(NAUTILUS)
I don't really know why this album has to be reviewed in here since it has nothing in common with Kogaionon's orientation. Probably an explanation would be that this guy's music is extremely relaxing and pleasant or maybe because from time to time you might find attractive to explore an easy mixture of Chris Isaac, PINK FLOYD and OPPOSITION. This CD contains two video-clips as well and this is a fact to sustain a high standard. If you are curious, try visiting www.nautilusmusic.com Rating: 0.80/1 (28.11)

KADENZZA(JAP)-"Into The Oriental Phantasma" CD'03 (6 tracks, 44. 44 min)
(HOLY)
Extreme Metal in the most accurate conduct! I couldn't explain exactly what they perform, but I can assure you instead that it is damn original! They define themselves to have approached a Grand Sympho Kamikaze Metal style! If up to me, I'd say that the Metal fury comes from those riffs in Y. Malmsteen manner or the tunes EMPEROR-like reaching even technical rhythms in MEKONG DELTA style or progressive ones. The keyboard is definitely intelligently used and the aggressive vocals alternate with Heavy ones putting forth an incendiary atmosphere! It is a weird musical approach but since Japan is not exactly a Metal land we can regard KADENZZA as an exotic experience, a pretty nice one and yet full of mystery! www.kadenzza.com Rating: 0.82/1 (04.11)

KALMAH(FIN)-"Swampsong" CD'03 (9 tracks, 43. 51 min)
(SPIKEFARM)
The third album of these Finns is based on speed combined with melodiousness. In lack of a proper concept but having a plain similitude with CATAMENIA's sound, KALMAH provides evidence that Melodic Black Metal becomes a mass-phenomenon for the Finnish Metal scene and, I must say, the mixture of aggressiveness and atmosphere plays a key-role in the sound of bands like this. I could say that Heavy Metal elements are now even more precisely pointed out because of astounding guitars while the keyboard reminds of AMORPHIS' debut album. This is a material completely in lack of originality but it surely can please the fans of extreme Metal. It is a well elaborated album but that would be about all. www.kalmah.com Rating: 0.78/1 (22.09)

KATATONIA(SWE)-"Viva Emptiness" CD'03 (13 tracks, 52. 50 min)
(PEACEVILLE)

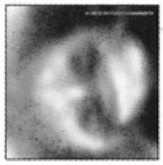


Nothing too interesting on the Nordic camp! The great-expected album has been released but by far, I am not in euphoric terms for the feedback. It is too alternative for Metallic people and too noisy for melodic Rock fans…Vocals are exactly what you cannot but notice from the first instance, yet there is nothing else. The Dark note continues to persist in the Swedish tunes; there is a sad sober atmosphere but here from to grand the album with praising marks, there is a huge step! Simplistic guitar tunes, lots of scratches in contrast with a depressive atmosphere created by the keyboard, a boring rhythm for the drums, plenty openings with repetitive elements, all these gather together in a common shape which single merit is to really make you sleep (some fans might name such meditation). I stick with my opinion namely: "Brave Murder Day" is KATATONIA's best album, while the rest of the materials are rather too impregnated with the fashionable melodic and superficial influences that came along over the years. I would like to conclude just that this very album is a very modest one if we compare it with other KATATONIA releases but definitely not if we compare it with other recent metallic releases. The rating I have made might say all about it. Rating: 0.90/1(18.02)

KEEP OF KALESSIN(NOR)-"Reclaim" MCD'04 (5 tracks, 27. 03 min)
(FACE FRONT)
I knew that the band disappeared in 2000! After two discreet albums, released at Avantgarde, the four Norwegians have decided to split. Obsidian C. kept going on by himself and here we are reviewing his work. I guess it is noticeable that he had the opportunity to play live in Satyr's band, fact which conferred him a good shape. Probably thanks to this fact he reached collaboration with Frost and now he is KEEP OF KALESSIN's actual bass player. There is even more to be said: vocal parts were performed by Atilla Chisar, known from his collaboration with bands like TORMENTOR, MAYHEM or ABORYM. Therefore, this is an outstanding Norwegian Black Metal, very fast, with a super-furious battery and Atilla's unique voice. There are as well some domestic passages where the synth is elegantly pointed out or where the guitar's solos tend to be Heavy Metal. Obsidian C brings nothing new but you should know that his approach of Black Metal is elegant and the bombastic sound is full of energy… if positive or negative… this is something only they can know! www.kalessin.no Rating: 0.81/1 (09.12)

KLABAUTAMANN(GER)-"Our Journey Through the Woods" demo CD'03 (10 tracks, 51. 34 min)
German Metal scene is jam-packed of modest bands that actually do nothing else but to copy other bands' style and their luck is to be born in a powerfully developed country as far as the musical industry is regarded so that they come to reach great advantageous deals in a very short while. A partial exception might be this very duet as it builds up a very well arranged and intelligent Black Metal with many acoustic guitars and atmospheric passages. Their music oscillates somehow between Raw Primitive Black Metal and Melodic Metal and it is rather knotty and complex with long elaborated tracks. The CD contains a professional booklet with an exquisite design and an extremely bizarre cover. We don't have here too many new elements or remarkable virtuosity! But I find pretty important that, after two modest demos, KLABAUTAMAN manages to bring up a modern material, extremely well conceived with an accurate sound and first rate mixing, qualities which should bring some concrete offers for the musicians. Time shall tell. www.klabautaman.de Rating: 0.80/1 (01.02)

KLIMT 1918(ITA)-"Undressed Momento" CD'03 (9 tracks, 46. 37 min)
(MY KINGDOM)



Well, this is a great surprise! Post Modern Music, which might be placed somewhere at the interflow of Avantgarde Music with Alternative Gothic Metal and '80's New Wave plus some roots in actual Progressive. If this doesn't give a clue for you, then try to put up in the same picture bands like: DEPECHE MODE, THE CURE, THE SMITHS, U2 or FILEDS OF NEPHILIM next to ANATHEMA, KATATONIA, OPETH, NOVEMBRE, TEARS FOR FEARS or PORCUPINE TREE. This is a successful album with both recording and mixing of crystal clarity (made by Giuseppe Orlando/NOVEMBRE) and an inspired interpretation! You'll hear calm voices playing in various languages (English, French, and Italian) relaxing rhythms, pale effects and sounds of natural authentic instruments. I do recommend this material as you'll discover a new universe… or for some nostalgic people… just a pleasant return in time! www.klimt1918.com Rating: 0.85/1 (16.11)

KONKHRA(DEN)-"Reality Check" CD'03 (12 tracks, 44. 35 min)
(CODE666)
Nothing special in Death Metal! It is just a good album well elaborated and executed, with a different and better profile preserving the same nucleus as for the debut; otherwise, just violence, brutality, Rock outlines… and that would be all. Probably a miracle for extreme music adepts but disappointing from the insight perspective! 0.70/1 (23.07)

KORPIKLAANI(FIN)-"Spirit Of The Forest" CD'03 (14 tracks, 48. 23 min)
(NAPALM)
I really cannot understand this fashion with Folk Metal! After BATTLELORE and ASMEGIN, now, a new Nordic band makes its debut at the Austrian label. Under the name of FOREST CLAN, the six musicians have decided to handle all traditional instruments and then mixed them with Metal ones so that they came with a sound which was supposed to be the most authentic but I can't tell for sure if for a Folk ground or a Metal one. In fact, the idea belongs to Jonne Jarvella who started to play under SHAMAN banner. After a while, time of releasing two materials, Idja and Shamaniac, he decided to contact other talented musicians and to come out with a debut material. Therefore, we can hear, besides guitars and drums, flute, percussion, accordion, violin and jouhikko. The album doesn't sound bad at all but I can't see exactly what mood can induce such sonorities. Probably IN EXTREMO fashion is on top so that there are many clones to be produced all over the Europe. Most certainly, such sound, live, on the stage, must discharge lots of energies but when I come to discover Power echoes I realize this is not exactly my cup of tea! Or maybe it is just about my limitations?! But I cannot help noticing how impressive was the promotional campaign for this album and I think than maybe, somewhere in Europe, such music might have an impact! I only stop at the fact that both recording and execution are of first rate, the approach… it is something you should judge! www.korpiklaani.com Rating: 0.78/1 (18.10)

KRALIZEC(CAN)-"Origin" CD'03 (9 tracks, 38. 08 min)
(MAQUIAVEL MUSIC)
I must admit that these Canadians really did surprise me! In spite of the fact that extreme Black Death Metal does not interest people the way it used to, ten years ago, well, there are many bands that refuse to give up this style. The four musicians are in this field for about five years and this debut seems to be a very clean accurate material full of energy and heartiness! Benjamin's ravishing voice reminds me of CANNIBAL CORPSE or GORGUTS but completes the drum machine which seems to be on fire. As new elements we can differentiate from time to time some clear vocals and even choral beside atmospheric effects and the keyboard simply surprises the listener used to rough tunes. The rapidity is just another characteristic element to KRALIZEC's sound so that we

may label this debut as belonging to Death Metal or Black Metal. Otherwise… just explosive guitars, extreme rhythms and a genuine apocalyptic atmosphere! I definitely cannot say KRALIZEC brings up something outstandingly new but I assure you this is a pleasant audition if you are a fan of extreme Metal of first class! www.maquiavelmusic.com Rating: 0.81/1 (15.09)

KRONOS(FRA)-"Colossal Titan Strife" CD'03 (11 tracks, 42. 40 min)
(XTREEM)
What should one expect from Dave Rotten's label (AVULSED)? Sick super-fast Death Metal in the most brutal shape! Demonic voices and throaty ones, guitars breaking the rhythms from a passage to another and a ceaseless battery! I understand this is the second album of the French in spite of more than 10 years of activity! Therefore we have an album promoting an anachronous style for some or one still alive for others! Sincerely I say I didn't notice any evolution or change in this sound! mikekronos@aol.com, www.xtreemmusic.com Rating: 0.76/1 (28.01)

LE RUE DELASHAY(USA)-"The Law of 8ve" CD'03 (14 tracks, 42. 14 min)
(ROOT OF ALL EVIL)
The ex-founder of THEATRE OF THE MACABRE and LORDE OF ALL DESIRES projects has reached the third album. It is not about a Metal or Rock music but an Instrumental Classic Symphonic, based on piano and keyboard, extremely dynamic and diverse… from passages that provoke horror images in your mind to lightened touches reminding of Bach. I have no idea if it is baroque or gothic, if it is Classic or Neo-Classic, if it is a soundtrack or else… Whatever it might be interpreted as, the truth is that this album is just a new complex experience, hardly accessible and… if you want… an artistic replica to ELEND… a more symphonic and organic one. www.theatrikil.com Rating: 0.82/1 (02.12)

MACABRE(USA)-"Murder Metal" CD'03 (13 tracks, 44. 20 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)
I thought that after "Dahmer", the three demented players would start to perform more human sonorities as they must have had enough of horror music and sick lyrics! That was a wrong guess! Corporate Death, Nefarious and Dennis The Menace return, after a 3 years recess, with a new sample of extreme Metal, pretty difficult to be described in words. It is the same Metal parody, which reunites under Murder Metal orientation various stylistic influences: Death Metal, Heavy, Rock, Jazz, Punk, Folklore, and Classic… a funny ugliness that makes no sense for no one… Short tracks developed in themes based on morbid adventures belonging to butchers, serial criminals or cannibals… Noticeable is that both recording and mixing are highly professional… but does it matter or help anymore? I must say, this outcome really disgusted me first and then…, in best case, amused me! This is too sick even for the Third Millennium! www.murdermetal.com Rating: 0.74/1 (09.11)

MADDER MORTEM(NOR)-"Deadlands" CD'03 (10 tracks, 57. 13 min)
(THE END)
I don't understand how a band like this one could receive only superlative appreciations! I do confess, even the previous album deeply disappointed me and then, after seeing them live in Budapest, I realised indeed that MM deserves little of my attention. Curiously or not, the new album has received a way too many fantastic reviews from the whole Metallic scene but I can't see why exactly, especially since the sound is very much changed. In other words, Agnette's voice is the main element to bring substance here trying to imitate the core of golden music THE 3RD AND THE MORTAL once used to play. Therefore, we have: Doom, Death, Gothic and Atmospheric, even Power or Alternative/Trip-Hop, all on a fragile Metal structure but in lack of any elements of virtuosity. I am somehow surprised as I don't understand how could these Norwegians manage to sign with Century Media, years ago and I believe that any album released in this way can only confuse people who are looking for quality in music. However, both intention and devotion are not to be contested but there is something missing… wither for the female vocals or elsewhere… and I don't know exactly what; perhaps the fragility?! www.maddermortem.com Rating: 0.78/1 (03.11)

MALIGNANCE(ITA)-"Regina Umbrae Mortis" CD'03 (9 tracks, 36. 18 min)
(BLACK TEARS OF DEATH)
This is a return in time… back to that primitive furious and very fast Black Metal with an underground sound! Even the booklet is in Black and white like a kind of proof of delineating, for sure, from any atmospheric or progressive influence! The ex-DREAMLORD have come together under this very title in 2000 and, after releasing a MCD recorded in a different formula, the four musicians sign with the Italian label and release now this very debut. Since the sound is based 100% on that old style I think that even the voices remind me from time to time of what Tom G. Warrior used to perform in CELTIC FROST. Otherwise… just pure madness, chaos and noise! Most certainly all fans of classic Black Metal will find pleasing to taste this sample of technical brutality. Rating: 0.80/1 (04.12)

MALMONDE(FRA)-"Malmonde" CD'03 (8 tracks, 34. 54 min)
(OSMOSE)
Well, this is an intelligent manner to approach Metal! Either is Cyber Metal or Metal Machine, this has no longer a great importance! Techno/Electro elements alternate with atmospheric ones (keyboard) and here we have various vocals, from clear clean ones to throaty ones! Otherwise, this is just an extreme Metal, a bombastic Modern Death/Black Metal, extremely dynamic and full of energy and spirit! Unfortunately, this album is short in duration! I think it is pleasantly strange to listen to such music played both in English and French! This is a real great surprise, at least as far as the musical approach is concerned! www.malmonde.com Rating: 0.83/1 (19.11)

MALOMBRA(ITA)-"The Dissolution Age" CD'01 (13 tracks, 72. 56 min)
(BLACK WIDOW)

What a voice… and what keyboards! Although the album is pretty old, I couldn't help myself in writing about it! Perhaps there are few of you who listened to this band's music… If so, then, don't waste time, listen to an unconventional sample of Dark Gothic Metal! This is one of the purest and most convincing Gothic albums I have ever listened to so far! Although the band has more than 10 years of activity and three albums released, I think there is little written and spoken about MALOMBRA! And this is a pity because their manner of execution is simply majestic! Mercy's voice is unique and its inflections… its low opera timbre are absolutely fascinating! I feel ashamed to tell you (and to be true!) that solely this year I listened to MALOMBRA for the first time but I am glad I had the chance! Well, this makes me think of how unfair is life and of how many modest bands come to enjoy a great publicity while some musical pearls, like this one, seem to always stay in anonymity. From the first tunes their skills in execution can be almost instantly distinguished and the Gothic they perform is an explosive one, while those Progressive touches come out both from guitars and keyboard! Yet, "basta" with superlatives, just that it is a brilliant album! For those who are more interested in this band, I tell you that the members are involved in other projects as well, such as IL SEGNO DEL COMANDO or HELDEN RUNE, both under the same Italian cult label. www.blackwidow.it Rating: 0.90/1 (30.11)

MANEGARM(SWE)-"Dodsfard" CD'03 (11 tracks, 32. 21 min)
(DISPLEASED)
After two albums in Black, Swedish Melodic Death and Folk Metal manner, the musicians show come up now with a Viking Metal sample that actually is not much different from what THYRFING perform. Perhaps the Death Metal direction is much more noticeable here. Otherwise, trust me, nothing interesting! It is a pleasant album to the ear and pretty much up to date as for the latest achievement in this field and containing traditional elements pretty well placed in contrast with the extreme Metal features so far in the 11 tracks. Well, although the execution is OK, MANEGARM does not bring something outstanding. I think this is just a new Viking Metal album that, in a short while, will be history or in the best case would be confounded with other similar ones. But who knows, maybe the next one will be just great and tremendously desired!? www.manegarm.com Rating: 0.80/1 (04.11)

MANES(NOR)-"Vilosophe" CD'03 (8 tracks, 47. 08 min)
(CODE666)

Avantgarde Metal Post Rock? I really have no idea how to define such sound but it is incredibly good! Reading the interview would make light over this band including of course all technical details, therefore I can only suggest you (with all my heart!) to urgently look for this album! It is something revolutionary, which shall create great confusion and shall mesmerise you in the same time! Rating: 0.92/1 (27.11)

MAR DE GRISES(CHI)-"The Tatterdemalion Express" CD'04 (7 tracks, 56. 07 min)
(FIREBOX)
This is a debutant band from a much distanced country and thus a great surprise for me…especially when I realize it actually is quality music despite of the fact it features nothing new or extraordinary! It is a depressive Doom Death Metal in SKEPTICISM style yet having a new fresh Progressive or Post Rock spirit, rather more melodic and accessible than other similar bands of this style. Keyboard and piano are the first elements to create a friendly responsive aura of the sound since otherwise all is so sad, hopeless and desolated. The violent voice proves it sometimes can be clear as well but it is rather a pale nuance of grey in a darkened morbid and tragic background! Nothing new, nothing fascinating… just a new Slow Doom Death Metal album! Rating: 0.79/1 (28.01)

MARSYAS(ROM)-"Lonely Tears" MCD'03 (9 tracks, 35. 05 min)
(BESTIAL)
I've seen these guys at a festival in Buzau and they seemed pretty well intentioned. I wasn't thrilled by but neither bothered! Perhaps I would comment on that screaming voice that sounded a little too exaggerated. They sound better in the studio version, much more atmospheric! In other words, the Gothic they advance is based on a melancholic sound with depressive shades outlined by an insistent violin and a bombastic keyboard. We could say there are plenty of Doom/Death Metal touches in the 90's style! The guitars are pretty modest and the clear voice is rather OK, except the passages in which they insist in being too aggressive turning the whole thing into an artificial embarrassing sound! I am honest, this is really bothering my ears! As for the rest, they benefited of a satisfactory mixing reaching a sound with roots in MY DYING BRIDE or ANATHEMA (at least this is their intention!) and some Gothic influences (older Gothic) as well… thanks to a male voice with a low impressive timbre (when clear and normal!). We can talk about some experimental intentions… and they don't sound bad at all… such as the acoustic version of "Sunset" track! There is nothing new… perhaps it is just a better album than all the rest released in the past 2-3 years in Romania. The CD looks pretty professional and so is the booklet. I think that, all in all, this is a good achievement for the autochthonous scene… which is shyer than the European one! www.marsyas.go.ro Rating: 0.78/1 (15.01)

MASTER(CZE)-"The Spirit Of The West" CD'04 (12 tracks, 40. 07 min)
(SYSTEM SHOCK)
I think it is indeed a great thing to see that after so many… many years these Death musicians still perform! I suppose it matters less if I comment over a material which would be accurately framed into a clear powerful explosive Death Metal… in lack of any melancholic or romantic messages. Riffs and guitar solos are as ravishing as always while the voice reminds me of old times when I used to have DEATH, CANNIBAL CORPSE or PUNGENT STENCH at my breakfast. This is an extreme "healthy" Metal but sick as well… depending on the way you want to see it…! Rating: 0.81/1 (11.02)

MELECHESH(HOL)-"Spynx" CD'03 (11 tracks, 67. 52 min)
(OSMOSE/THE END)
The third album of these Blackers is the most elaborated one and of the finest quality in their entire history. Declared adepts of Mesopotamian/Sumerian Metal, the four musicians mix fast furious extreme Metal with some traditional elements. In better words, we have here some specific instruments, delicately used all along the album, which confer an Oriental appearance to the sound. If we don't take in consideration "The Arrival Ritual", which is rather an oriental experiment, we could say that the music is a first rate Black Metal, brutal but atmospheric as well. It is an elegant material, professionally conceived, and I rated it in consequence, especially since it features great injuries at the originality chapter! Well, this is what it happens to almost all Black Metal albums of today! For the execution: Irreproachable! I think I find interesting even the CELTIC FROST, Babylon Fell... cover version! www.melechesh.com Rating: 0.83/1 (20.01)

MELKOR(ITA)-"Echoes Of Solitude" demo CD'03 (8 tracks, 38. 49 min)
This is another solo project trying to follow BURZUM's footprints! Marco Garegnani brings here a different Black Metal in old style, with plenty influences from the Norwegian school, a primitive voice and various tunes... from fast and rough ones to slow, gloomy Doom Metal, even Ambient. It is obvious that the Italian has made some efforts for this second demo but I am afraid that intention only... cannot make impression! Moreover, the sum of all influences gathered here finally leads to a musical hotchpotch with no given path, no given personality. Let's see if this new year brings for him better inspiration and better luck... www.morgoroth.com Rating: 0.75/1 (09.01)

MIRRORTHRONE(FRA)-"Of Wind & Weeping" CD'03 (8 tracks, 52. 46 min)
(RED STREAM)
It is neither Atmospheric, nor Gothic, nor Black Metal! It is something knotty conceived and executed by one and person and only, Vladimir. The sound is rather synthetic, with an insistent keyboard, simplistic Guitars and a baroque atmosphere. There is a large variety of voices... from those screaming ones to clear and choral ones and there are some slow passages with some female vocals echoes... It actually is a kind of Metal gravitating around a hallucinating piano and a guitar that sounds pretty primitive. The lyrics are both in French (which gives a poetic note to the music) and English and I must confess that the influences of classic music are present all inside the eight tracks. This must be a good debut, an innovative one, but still rather too complicated is if take a better look at it. www.mirrorthrone.com Rating: 0.81/1 (02.12)

MISANTHROPE(FRA)-"Sadistic Sex Daemon" CD'03 (11 tracks, 50. 31 min)
(HOLY)
This time Philippe stepped forward a bombastic ultra-rapid and atmospheric sound. In other words, we can talk about a Progressive Power Metal with remarkable Heavy Metal virtuosities. On the other hand, that Dark note has disappeared for good even if vocals are still aggressive from time to time. This is an album addressed to a larger public less focused on extreme Metal but on melodic lines well interpreted and with show effects! I would like to see/listen to MISANTHROPE live and I am pretty convinced that a concert of these French musicians can provide more energy than 10 bottles of Red-Bull! I must say that those devoted to underground sonorities might get a little disappointed, but this is it... each one has an individual evolution. What is most important is the respect and if we take a look at this band history, I think they do deserve all the respect. However, I think this album is the best for revealing these musicians' instrumental skills and they really are good! Rating: 0.87/1 (18.09)

MOONSORROW(FIN)-"Kivenkantaja" CD'03 (6 tracks, 53. 58 min)
(SPIKEFARM)
I have no words! This is an impeccable execution! This is Epic Black Metal in the most Nordic shape bursting in traditional/folk movements, war-like vocals, majestic choirs, genuine instruments... well, a veritable replica to what BATHORY used to be ages ago! Vocals accurate interchanges with atmospheric keyboard and various rhythmic transformations, all in a sane masculine note of a confident beauty... simply make of it a fine piece of collection! My complain is connected with the acute lack of originality in essence since the contours are pretty well modelled and can smoothly get genuine from time to time. The album is of a better arrangement than the previous one and perhaps this is their climax! More than this, in the same manner, would be nothing but repetition and stagnation. There is as well a track with female vocals but nothing impressive except probably the nostalgic note. Otherwise, good long tracks full of various resources; the epic dimension elegantly intertwines the atmospheric one but in a strong bombastic and inspired Black Metal background. www.moonsorrow.cjb.net Rating: 0.90/1 (14.09)

MOONSORROW(FIN)-"Suden Uni" CD'04 (8 tracks, 46. 25 min)
(SPIKEFARM)

If you still recall, inside Kogaionon # 6, I made a favorable review for this debut released in 2001 at Plasmatica Records. Since Sorvali brothers in the meanwhile became more popular, Spikefarm decided to re-edit the album and this time including a bonus track, two video tracks and an entire concert performed in 2003. If we count as well the design... which was made by Niklas Sundin... and the fact that the entire sound was re-mastered... well, then you can imagine what wave of appreciation this sample of Epic Melodic Folk Black Metal would rise all over the world! And I tell you: this really kicks some asses! Rating: 0.88/1 (19.02)

MORIFADE(SWE)-"Domi<>nation" CD'03 (9 tracks, 44. 50 min)
(KARMAGEDDON)
In the previous issue I have mentioned about "Imaginarium" album as of a material full of energy but nothing more. The new CD follows a Power Metal line with killing riffs, a bombastic keyboard and a fast battery. Unfortunately the male voice is rather too reedy for my taste... so that I finally came not to like this album. In fact, I must be sincere; this Power Metal style is not a favourite one although in time I came to listen to dozens of such clones. The album includes a live video clip as well and I can notice a band like that really has a big success during live performances! Maybe this is the reason why Karmageddon promotes their albums! www.morifade.com Rating: 0.70/1 (07.01)

MORNING AFTER(GRE)-"Beneath The Real" CD'03 (11 tracks, 47. 24 min)
(THE END/BLACK LOTUS)
I suppose the luck (advantage?) of these two young musicians is none other than the nationality (Greek) since the Greek label has offered them a contract in a short time. I do admit their musical approach is not to be framed in common terms since their stylistic palette is actually pretty assorted. I think this album can captivate interest of KATATONIA, CREMATORY, CEMETARY and even HIM or LINKIN PARK fans. Melody and Atmospheric are fundamental elements for this very concept but I think Classical Metal or Gothic Rock are not to be forgotten. There are both clear and screaming vocals and the guitars' sound is often covered by an abundant synth. Well, I think it is about a complex New Modern Metal and it sounds good but I find it somehow rather too diverse, which confused me in framing it a way or another. Perhaps, after a second album, I might pronounce myself if this Experimental Metal is serious enough or simply just an unfortunate tentative to play something different than what's fashionable. There must have been some inspiration but I am afraid it wasn't enough so that this album could have been labeled as a sensational debut! www.black-lotus-recs.com Rating: 0.80/1 (01.02)

MUSTAN KUUN LAPSET(FIN)-"Kauniinhauta'03 (8 tracks, 38. 05 min)
(NORTHERN SOUND)
Here we go again with Black Metal! Already at a second album but still looking for an identity, I guess, despite the fact that all lyrics are exclusively in Finnish. If the voice means nothing to my tricky ears (screaming, aggressive but nothing too particular!), well there are some passages that remind me of that great In times Before The Light, COVENANT. In other words, I'd say that the Synth is used in a very intelligent manner and probably is the only instrument to sound professional. The guitars are rather modest and so is the battery. We have as well, from time to time, dome female vocals, suppurated atmospheric effects and Gothic elements which might please in an audition but definitely do not impress. If the tracks, per ensemble, seem to keep the same Nordic Black/Death Metal, well, the first track simply amazes making an entrance as if it was in TRISTANIA style while the last one follows a very rhythmic and melodic yet still simplistic line even if all contractual concepts are combined in an attractive way. I think it is worth it an audition but nothing more. Or maybe I am again to picky... as always actually... www.northernsound.cjb.net www.mkl.cjb.net Rating: 0.80/1 (06.11)

MY DYING BRIDE(UK)-"Songs Of Darkness, Words Of Light" CD'04 (8 tracks, 61. 06 min)
(PEACEVILLE)

What could be left for one to say when holding a new album of these British! It is their eighth chapter! Conservatism seems to be a fundamental feature for this small continent and this is perfectly reflected in music as well. Aaron brings up now a first rate Dark Doom Death Metal album, pretty darkened and full of mystery! Although the sound is rather old, in the manner of the first album, MDB succeeds to amaze today with the most depressive album in their history! Perhaps my statement might sound a little hazarded but I only ask you to take in account one single aspect: when everybody is chasing for Atmospheric or Gothic frames, full of melody and modern rhythmic and commercial elements, MDB reveals a genuine Dark bomb defying any trend or influence of The New Wave by insisting on simple elements guided by guitars and battery and led by an extraordinary voice -able to feature all kinds of inflections! I do admit, from time to time, a distant keyboard can be heard but it rather sounds like a pipe organ than a bombastic instrument and it harmoniously meets a sound already frozen... already full of feelings of solitude and isolation and retreat! Here there are all kinds of passages, from the most sinister and introverted ones to melodic and accessible frames developing a warm friendly communication lane! In other words, this is an album to strike all faithful MDB fans and perhaps it shall make an impression on the new ones as well! I must confess, this very release both shocked and fascinated me despite the fact I actually heard nothing new... Perhaps it is about memories... about a return in time, I wouldn't know for sure but listening to this sound again "threw" me into an exclusive mood! Well, the artistic aspect was accomplished by the one who used to shock us 10 years ago, Andy Green... It is an exceptional imagery! So, this is a new "Like Gods Of The Sun" album but in a version up to the III-rd Millennium! A must is "The Blue Lotus" track!! www.mydyingbride.org Rating: 0.93/1 (22.01)

MY SHAMEFUL(FIN)-"Of All The Wrong Things" CD'03 (8 tracks, 54. 32 min)
(FIREBOX)
Although the band started since 1999, after three demos, one under an Italian label, Nocturnal Music, they still didn't manage to impose themselves. There can be spoken about a lent depressive Funeral Doom Metal, pretty characteristic to Finnish bands such as SKEPTICISM or SHAPE OF DESPAIR. Obviously, the two musicians sustain that their only source of inspiration was nature alone but who cares? It is a successful album, with a strong meditative power but nothing more! The chapter of originality is definitely out of the picture and, in compensation; the execution is up with the modern times but still nothing special! It is something nice to listen to but

I am not sure that for a long time. http://listen.to/myshameful Rating: 0.77/1 (14.09)

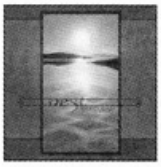
NARGAROTH(GER)-"Geliebte des Regens" CD'03 (6 tracks, ~3. 10 min)
(NO COLOURS)
This is a genuine sample of Cold Misanthropic Black Metal. The Germans come back in forth with a very interesting album, not necessarily as approach, but definitely as execution! It is a kind of Melancholic Grim Black Metal, with noisy guitars, rhythmic battery and screaming aggressive vocals. It is curious to notice that after a pretty long amazing intro we can only enjoy five tracks… but, hey…, these have over ten minutes each and the guitars are the leading element of their music! The bad news is that the tracks do resemble one with each other and sometimes they even feature some repetitive monotonous passages. But let's be positive and check this album in its whole: over 60 minutes of depressive but noisy Black Metal, rather slow and melancholic, which reminds me of the past project, STRID. Therefore, from BURZUM or DARK THRONE to GRAVELAND or SHINING, all disciples of Black Metal should definitely be pleased with the new NARGAROTH album! Rating: 0.85/1 (14.12)

NAZCA(NOR)-"Non Grata" CD'03 (11 tracks, 49. 06 min)
(EIBON)
This project is indeed a pleasant surprise even if for me it is a premiere! I understood that the band had a rough time in reaching this recording: troubles, adventures, disappointments and bad luck. Well I find pretty hard to describe a Post Rock/Wave band as long as this kind of music and sound is completely different from what I usually listen. Karstein Volle's voice is so calm, "heartsick" and with various modulations. All in all his voice sends me back decades ago, reminding me of DOORS. In fact, the whole sound is sad, in a low tonality, even grave here and there but definitely pleasant to both ear and heart. This is a band to be remembered and I recommend "Non Grata" to all who enjoy comestible and melodious Wave. www.nazca.net Rating: 0.74/1 (09.02)

NECROPHAGIA(USA)-"The Divine Art Of Torture" CD'03 (10 tracks, 36. 53 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)
The six angry musicians return with a new sample of Horror/Gore Death Metal, even sicker and inhuman than ever! Although it has been more than 5 years since their last album, well, the American band, NECROPHAGIA, has lost neither the rhythm nor the inspiration. The 11 new sequences are ruled by a sinister sober and really frightening atmosphere while the diabolic keyboard simply provokes a strange genuine feeling. I could say that it is for the first time when the Death Metal NECROPHAGIA used to perform, practically has changed its façade, absolutely different from what extreme brutality adepts might expect. Besides crazy guitars' riffs, an incessant battery and a bass low tonality, there is a mixture of demonic voices, which actually outlines a remarkable Horror picture. It is a well weighted album, refined and certainly of first class, probably of a great importance for the future of Death Metal (if this style ever continues to be) and a material that deserves praising words even if solely for the blaspheming atmosphere the musicians succeeded to create. A super gig is expected, all around Europe, and so are some sensational video clips directed by specialists who supervised the production of Cradle Of Fear, My Sweet Satan or Spiderman. Rating: 0.75/1(02.02)

NEON DREAM(GER)-"Anodyne" CD'03 (9 tracks, 42. 23 min)
(EQUINOXE)
I'd say this band is by far the most promising band coming from the German label even if this is just a debut. The mixture of Gothic, Rock and Wave features a very complex and profound structure, with Dark references and even Romantic ones. Let's see: long imposing guitar solos, a full of atmosphere keyboard, melodiousness and the male voice reminds me of THE 69 EYES. After you listen to the tracks more carefully you come to think that a guiding mark for the five German musicians was THE SISTERS OF MERCY as the rhythms, accords and interludes resemble very much. For the sound to be even "tougher" the Germans have invited (for some of the tracks) a soprano so that her voice would bring a different aura, a certain colour and a more hospitable atmosphere. Anyway, I couldn't say it is an album focused on rapidity or a classical Goth one, because there is a successful fusion of influences from 80's and 90's, even if sometimes it brings confusion into the listener's mind… Bottom line: this is a music for soul, melancholic and apt to awake nostalgias… at least, those guitars… really kick some asses! www.neondream.de Rating: 0.86/1 (30.11)

NEST(FIN)-"Woodsmoke" CD'03 (9 tracks, 44. 32 min)
(CORVUS)



First time you read about this project was three years ago when they released "Fabled Lore" demo and really interested me. Well, this time, A. Tolonen brings in the debut album, which is inspired by nature and turns out to be a veritable acoustic Ambient Folk. I think **kantele** still is the essential instrument and it sounds extremely peaceful. Otherwise: comfortable keyboard, hypnotic tympani and a profound voice in background. This is a kind of Nordic melancholia transposed in an impressing silhouette of Ambient Acoustic Epic. This is an album I truly recommend! www.corvusrecords.com, http://nest.atolonen.cjb.net Rating: 0.86/1 (30.11)

NEW ORDER OF MESSIAH(ROM)-"Fall Waltz" demo CD'03 (2 tracks, 10. 43 min)
It is not one of my pleasures to make notes over succinct materials since there is such a hard job to get an idea of the whole outcome…! For the case of these musicians from Maramures I can say that we have very interesting ideas especially if I refer to a flute that never stops during the entire audition and which actually confers an original atmosphere to the sound itself. The keyboard is exploited at maximum capacity even if it finally comes to nothing too serious. For the rest, I'd say we have some primitive guitars with very melodic tunes outlining a kind of atmospheric Doom Death Metal with serious references to Gothic and Black as well. The brutal voice is slightly throaty and in a permanent connection with that incessant flute. I think that, probably, the whole concept is based on contrast. The bad news is that the mixing is not one of the best and therefore the final outcome is not a great one! Yet I repeat, I really like the direction these young musicians approached but nevertheless they have a long way ahead before the point of actually saying something to the Metal scene of today! I've heard that the six have been prepared all this time for releasing a new material, therefore, stay tuned or visit their site: www.nom.as.ro Rating: 0.70/1 (10.01)

NIGHTFALL(GRE)-"I am Jesus" CD'03 (11 tracks, 52. 13 min)
(BLACK LOTUS)



I had the impression that the Greek band has split! After a 10 years epopee beside Holy Records, the four Greeks had to wait another three years until releasing an album and this time under Black Lotus label. I have listened to the album for several times and I still listen to it… that is why I think I am not mistaken if telling I cannot notice great differences between what they have done so far and what they perform now… It is about a modern Melodic Death Metal, pretty colored, with lots of Gothic, Dark and Black profiles, clear and aggressive vocals, a common keyboard and some powerful but linear riffs. I didn't find it a "striking outcome" although I believe I couldn't reproach a thing as far as mixing and execution are concerned. However there is a remarkable track, "Treasures In Aramaic Tears", which, through the whole atmosphere… including vocals… simply turns my thoughts towards MY DYING BRIDE. All in all, this is a fine album which bothers not my ears but neither enchants! www.nightfallstar.com Rating: 0.79/1 (10.02)

NIGHTINGALE(SWE)-"Alive Again: The Breathing Shadow part IV" CD'03 (10 tracks, 49. 28 min)
(THE END)
Who didn't hear of Dan Swano? Let me remind you some of the bands he collaborated with during the years: EDGE OF SANITY (Death Metal), PAN-THY-MONIUM (Death/Doom), UNICORN (Sympho Prog Pop), WOUNDED KNEE (Hardcore), ULAN BATOR (Punk-Pop), DAN SWANO (Progressive Metal), KARABOUDJAN (Doom-fusion Instrumental), ODYSSEY (Power Doom Metal), INFESTDEAD (Death Metal), BLOODBATH (Death Metal), STAR ONE (Space Metal). If we refer strictly to NIGHTINGALE, then we can say that the fourth chapter is the most commercial and domestic one, a kind of modern WHITESNAKE with a great mixture of Progressive Melodic and Hard Rock, pretty attractive and pleasant to the ear. In fact, the whole sound is very melodic and rhythmic and I can't deny that all musicians are very gifted and with long-lasting activity in Metal sphere such as Erik (GODSEND) or Tom (MEMORY GARDEN). Therefore, the Swano brothers delivered, as usually, a positive Rock, slightly melancholic but digestible and I think that just perfect for a live performance. This is one of the sensational outcomes of the year! Rating: 0.87/1 (17.09)

NOCTURNUS(USA)-"The Nocturnus Demos" CD'03 (8 tracks, 41. 03 min)
(KARMAGEDDON)
This is a simple collection of tracks released already on the famous demos of the American band, "Nocturnus" and The Science Of Horror". Pure Death Metal on the first, more intelligent and innovative on the second… with an imposing keyboard and with… Mike Browning in a perfect shape! The booklet presents a few flyers belonging to those times (1998), reviews published in various magazines for both materials and Mike's foreword. This is dedicated exclusively to the collectors! Rating: 0.80/1 (27.11)

NYDVIND(FRA)-"Eternal Winter Domain" CD'03 (10 tracks, 55. 45 min)
(SACRAL)
Here we are enjoying again a new Heathen Metal band… in fact, a modern Pagan Black Metal, full of atmosphere and melody, with epic echoes, hymnal voices and screaming ones, folk tunes and explosive guitars. This is more domestic than HELHEIM, WINDIR or EINHERJER but paler than MOONSORROW, PRIMORDIAL or SKYFORGER. Definitely, it is not original, in lack of authenticity but pleasing to the ear… This would be the sound created by those French musicians who are as well members in bands like: TEMPLE OF BAAL, BELENOS, DESPOND, BRAN BARR, HEOL TELWEN, ACROMION or NUNKTHUL. This is an elegant imposing album with some HIMINBJORG influences and I think it is different than all the sum of recent modest and primitive releases. But here from to assume it is a masterpiece… there is a long distance. Still I think the manner of execution is to be praised so… you better keep in mind this band and its name… as you may hear of it again! www.nydvind.com Rating: 0.81/1 (28.11)

OLD DEAD TREE(FRA)-"The Nameless Disease" CD'03 (11 tracks, 48. 43 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)
Manuel Munoz' team brings up an interesting profile of Gothic Metal! In other words, the assortment of extreme Dark Rock, Metal and Pop accents develops a style not necessarily original but definitely interesting both as concept and execution. The male voice's timbre impresses and its inflections are really touching perhaps because there is not a "struggle" to scream but a baritone tone… sometimes even recitative and those come together in a certain charm. From time to time, here it come a yelling voice trying to create that boring contrast used enough these days and finally ending in a "genuine fake". The instruments outline the most representative element of the sound namely the voice! And I must confess I really enjoyed such method! Otherwise, it is a well elaborated album with some avantgarde ideas which detach from the usually mediocre conglomerate of crap recordings yet with one complaint: in lack of dynamic. I'd say one single thing: the sad depressive overall note of the album comes from a tragic event: the bass player's suicide (one of the band's founder members). If we reconsider the fact that after all, it is just a debut, then we should be more indulgent! And I do believe that young musicians can benefit from our clemency. A nice surprise! www.theolddeadtree.com Rating: 0.80/1 (15.09)

OMNIUM GATHERUM(FIN)-"Spirits And August Light" CD'03 (9 tracks, 42. 01 min)
(THE END)
Here we come again to Death Metal as melodic and fast as DARK TRANQUILITY or CHILDREN OF BODOM. If I think better, I believe Epic Heavy Melodic Death Metal would be the most appropriate characterization meaning: aggressive voices, explosive guitar solos, rhythmic keyboard, simple battery and nothing else. Perhaps some people would die for such sonorities, but not me… I am tired of listening to bands that come with nothing new or out f the ordinary trying their luck solely with a common and stereotype sound. I suppose it doesn't matter if the album is recorded and mixed in exceptional professional conditions… or maybe it does for one audition in purpose of curiosity… Rating: 0.78/1 (17.11)

ON THORNS I LAY(GRE)-"Egocentric" CD'03 (10 tracks, 49. 44 min)
(BLACK LOTUS)
Here we are… holding the sixth album of these four musicians! I must admit that OTIL offered us pretty various sonorities so far… from Progressive, Experimental or Doom Death to Pop, Rock or Gothic… sometimes rather too commercial. The new outcome seems to be more Metal than the previous one with an emphasized Dark note… something in KATATONIA's style, with Depressive shades but still as Melodic as ever and still digestible. I guess they come out now with a more coherent approach, even if not exactly original, with clear pleasant vocals featuring female ones as well so that the sound would borrow some new colors. I actually don't know if these are the most appropriate colors but… anyway… who am I to judge?! Guitars play somewhere at the limit of Rock and Metal and the vocals are in the control of the whole sound… while the battery hardly gets noticeable. Perhaps there are some pale echoes of OPETH but… over a panoramic view… the album impresses thanks to its melancholic aura elegantly outlined inside some passages. I think this is a material to please the fans of KATATONIA's last album, for example…www.onthornsilay.com Rating: 0.85/1 (11.02)

OPETH(SWE)-"Damnation" CD'03 (8 tracks, 43. 19 min)
(MUSIC FOR NATIONS)



Apogee… madness… splendour… perfection! This is by far the album of the year! Mike has finally decided to give up almost completely to the throaty vocals and so we can experience and enjoy an exceptional musical jewel! At the limit of Metal next to Rock, on a stunning Progressive background embraced by Dark shadows and with a strong nostalgic effect, scattered with Blues echoes, OPETH reveals a new face of its music with hallucinate tunes, meditative sombre atmosphere… all put together into a Classic Rock note featuring a 70's intervention but harmoniously and originally arranged. Although recorded in the same time with "Deliverance", this material is rather a Non-Metal album, definitely with no common points with its twin brother proving in fact that OPETH's maturity only now came to be outlined. Mike's clear voice simply ravages the calm and relaxing guitar tunes and, along with the keyboard, accurately delineates the sound's stylistic rhythm. This is one of the few albums that lately let me speechless and therefore I rate it (any doubts???) at maximum level! Mike, congratulations! It seems like Steven Wilson's mastery powers (PORCUPINE TREE) left a serious and strong fingerprint on the band's inspiration! And when I think that Mike got married this summer… I can only imagine that the new album would be in the same manner! I cannot wait! www.opeth.com Rating: 1/1 (15.09)

ORPHANED LAND(ISR)-"Mabool (The Story Of The Three Sons Of Seven)" CD'04 (12 tracks, 68. 02 min)
(CENTURY MEDIA)



It took over eight years to enjoy again a new album of these musicians! I admit I am a big admirer of OL and their first album never leaves my car. Even if the new approach is pretty shocking… after an attentive listening I came to discover that the new album is a brilliant one! Very complex, built on a proper Metal structure, the five trespass almost all Metal styles, from aggressive brutal Black Metal, encountering Dark Doom or Atmospheric frames to Progressive as a final destination. If it is to be a more detailed analysis I'd say that neither Psychedelic Rock influences nor Jazz frames miss from the picture. And for complete scenery… the amazing element is none other than traditional music overwhelming the entire sound throughout oriental instruments of great value and importance! Ahhh, I forgot to tell you that amongst guitars, battery, synth, piano, cello, violins, Oud, Bouzouki or Saz, there are to be noticed remarkable impressive female choirs, diverse voices from aggressive and brutal ones to chanted melodic intoned or whispered ones! After listening to the album for more than a few times, you come to realize that it actually is the most melodic one in the band's history and in the same time a transit album making a passing from aggressive Metal, based on Death/Black Metal, to a modern calm melodic and digestible Metal. I believe it is the most complex album I have listened to in the past years and probably such is granted by the stylistic synthesis featured inside. It is, if you prefer, a kind of overpass between the music they started to play 12 years ago and the characteristic sound of today. Most certainly, a new album would bring other major changes and probably the structure would be a Progressive one in which Kobi's voice might leave all extreme profiles. We shall live and see! www.orphaned-land.com Rating: 0.96/1 (18.01)

OSTARA(AUS)-"Ultima Thule" CD'03 (10 tracks, 50. 18 min)
(EISLICHT)
Known thanks to the collaboration with the famous label World Serpent, when a spectacular debut, Secret Homeland", was released, the Australian band made its debut at Eisliche with „Kingdom Gone" and brings now a new material. They seem to follow the same manner namely: Melancholic Wave Pop with touches of peaceful Rock. Take notice that the line up includes two interesting names: Kari Hatakka (synth), pretty known from WALTARI and Stu Mason, from a punk project, SKAMPER. With a remarkable calm voice (Richard Leviathan), OSTARA manages to outline a very comfortable musical style but nothing more. www.eislicht.de Rating: 0.81/1 (10.11)

PANTHEIST(BEL)-"O Solitude" CD'03 (5 tracks, 57. 46 min)
(FIREBOX)
Firebox Records seems to focus on bands with similar styles and Funeral Metal is ruling at the moment. This very project belongs to Kostas as far as concept is regarded and we know him because of his activity and involvement in Doom-Metal.com. This time we can enjoy an avant-garde note but with the same backbone: Slow Doom Metal full of long-lasting tunes and depressive atmosphere. There are some refrains more dynamic and highlighted but still to shy in front of such enormous negative energy already discharged in these tracks. Solitude, depression, feeling of black-out, sadness… all in a hopeless apocalyptic background… www.doom-metal.com/pantheist Rating: 0.77/1 (14.09)

PENITENT(NOR)-"Deserted Dreams" CD'03 (10 tracks, 53. 40 min)
(BEYOND)
Although everybody knew that PENITENT ceased to exist, Karsten Hamre returns with a new album, completely changed from what we knew or expected so far from this project. I don't actually know why, maybe having as residence a Romanian city (Iasi) for over a year… has changed and drastically influenced him so that he came to giving up on vocals of any kind transforming PENITENT into an instrumental project. This is a bombastic Dark Ambient, perhaps the most domestic sound so far… based on noises, effects and marches… all controlled and intelligently mastered by PC. The resulted music is well outlined, expressive and reminds of the first material, DENSE VISION SHRINE; with piano tunes alternating between grave and melancholic notes, a weird atmosphere… almost perfect for an opening either of photography art or painting… maybe even for a motion picture! I don't think this material will satisfy the ones who expected/hoped for PENITENT to insist on the melodic or Metal dimension! It is just a pure Dark Ambient album and it will tasty solely to those who constantly are looking forward each release of labels such as: CMI, Dragon Flight, Crowd Control or DFR. Otherwise… my feeling is that for this material the musician was in a massive lack of inspiration. Rating: 0.79/1 (16.11)

PENUMBRA(FRA)-"Seclusion" CD'03 (8 tracks, 45. 01 min)
(SEASON OF MIST)



Well, the third album seems to be better than the previous ones. This time, with a different line-up, Dorian, beside other six musicians thrust upon an encouraging replica to the first TRISTANIA albums, maybe not that radical, but the sum of styles mixed here in a discreet score simply is balanced and refined. Warm female vocals (Anita Covelli is back!), male screaming vocals and baritone or clear ones as well, abundant keyboard, Irish bagpipes, flute, inspiration of Bulgarian traditional tunes, symphonic orchestral "fingerprints"… everything sounds so attractive and compelling. Well, it is true that sometimes stylistic diversity risks to get annoying but I assure you that after some auditions you'd get used with the new PENUMBRA and you'd discover there is still about an identity of their own. Nevertheless TRISTANIA or SIRENIA's fans shall definitely be enchanted by this sample of Black Gothic Metal in a French version. Rating: 0.87/1 (14.09)

PERISHED(NOR)-"Seid" CD'03 (8 tracks, 45. 50 min)
(DISPLEASED)



This is an old surprise, which, although founded over 10 years ago, this band hasn't accomplished so far but one single album, "Kark" and a MCD. These Norwegians don't come with new stuff, on the contrary, just Nordic traditional Black Metal taking now shapes of Death or even Trash, extremely aggressive and in full force! There are yet two tracks really impressing with a great harmony coming from the keyboard, Dance Of The Elves and On Wings Of Desire; two remarkable sequences, very atmospheric and with a few melancholic echoes discharging a real nostalgic aura. Otherwise, nothing interesting, nothing new, just a decent Black Metal well mixed and arranged with a nice booklet in a full harmony the whole musical concept. I think it is a decent album that won't pass without notice amongst the fans of Norwegian Black Metal! Frankly, it was a real pleasure to listen to this album! www.perished.biz Rating: 0.83/1 (29.10)

PEST(SWE)-"Desecration" CD'03 (6 tracks, 34. 24 min)
(NO COLOURS)
I knew pretty much about this project from the demos I received years back. It seems like the German label has found a delight in this Grim and Hateful Black Metal and thus offered the Swedes a good contract. Some of you might argue with me over this but I wonder: did we really need another "Transilvanian Hunger"? It is just a DARK THRONE clone but in the Swedish version, which sounds good, don't misunderstand me…, but it is completely in lack of inspiration or originality. Even if this album is out of compromises or mercy, the sound is rather faded and only a pure aggressiveness can be considered a characteristic element. It is too little for a band that wishes to impress! Perhaps such would be possible with the next album! Rating: 0.79/1 (14.12)

PLAN E(FIN)-"Best Kept Secret" CD'03 (10 tracks, 44. 24 min)
For such sound…there is one single appropriate term: WEIRDNESS! If this might be translated as Dark, Rock, Wave or Pop, this is really insignificant. Jani Lehtosaari (ex IMPALED NAZARENE) has founded this project eight years ago and reached now the third album of release. Sincerely speaking, I have never ever listened to such a sinister music in my life so far… but there is something that keeps a sentimental timbre… a certain melancholy in their tunes. Imagine how it would sound a music based solely on bass, keyboards, drums (Sir Luttinen) and vocals? With no guitars… The voice reminds me of Aaron (MY DYING BRIDE) and JOY DIVISON or Nick Cave… but except such… all is out of time, without rhythm or any other guiding line. I think you will notice some psychedelic influences of the 70's thanks to the keyboard and some

electronic elements but all in all it is a kind of Rock rather Dark than else. You should trust me when I tell you this is an album 100% original, with a background inspired both by old Rock and contemporaneous Metal. It is an album hard to be labeled but intriguing and captivating for an audition! www.plan-e-tarium.com Rating: 0.78/1 (15.12)

PRAEDA(FRA)-"Eden… Hele" CD'03 (7 tracks, 29. 43 min)
(SACRAL)
This is a too short and succinct album for making an impression on me: either original or just another clone? As far as inspiration we could name BURZUM (as voice) and we could gravitate somewhere around first EMPEROR because of that amazing background keyboard, which is of a certain charm. But that should be all. As for the rest… this is just Nordic Black Metal with leading guitars and faded instrumentation but with a vigilant drum machine. It is hard and strange to frame this extreme style as long as it oscillates between primitive brutality, in old style, and a modern atmospheric aggressiveness! All in all, this attempt of whatever it was… did not convince me! Rating: 0.70/1 (08.01)

PRESENCE(ITA)-"Gold" CD'01 (7 tracks, 53. 11 min)
(BLACK WIDOW)



I have an exquisite pleasure to review such musical project since it is a cult band in Italy and not only. Founded at the beginning of 90's, the trio has released four albums so far and received a good appreciation solely from the fans of Progressive Rock. Unlike other similar bands, the Italians develop an amazing Dark note throughout a superb female voice (Sofia Baccini's) bringing here some special opera elements. This is a relaxing atmospheric music yet very complex and elaborated in the same time! There are lots of elegant choral effects and dramatic-theatrical shades, grave tonalities and sober ones. This is just a different Rock, a different Metal… pretty characteristic for what Black Widow label releases. www.presence.it Rating: 0.88/1 (06.12)

RAIN PAINT(FIN)-"Nihil Nisi Mors" CD'03 (8 tracks, 50. 19 min)
(MY KINGDOM)
Aleksi Ahokas is known for his activity in bands like: HOLLOW, RAPTURE, DIABLERIE and PROPHET. In fact, after five years in PROPHET, Aleksi has decided to change the name into RAIN PAINT and it seems to have gathered some advantages. First of all, his band received soon an offer and secondly he succeeded to bring in other active members from other bands (FRAGILE HOLLOW, RAPTURE or DENIGRATE). I guess it is difficult to describe what we have here because of a massive fusion of various influences, from Gothic Metal and Dark Wave to Melodic Death, Doom or even Progressive Rock! In other words, imagine a mixture of KATATONIA, ANATHEMA, MY DYING BRIDE, HIM, THE CURE and TYPE O NEGATIVE. Vocals alternate between calm and extreme touches while guitars are either alternative or aggressive; the keyboard intends to develop a Dark atmospheric note but in the end… there is such a confusion! I am sorry for what I am about to say but… I understood nothing from this album. And here it is the label's characterization: Intense and Emotional Music! Hmmm, so it might be… but these guys have definitely a lot to work… to reach such! www.rainpaint.cjb.net Rating: 0.78/1 (16.11)

RAISON D' ETRE(SWE)-"Requiem For Abandoned Souls" CD'03 (5 tracks, 49. 59 min)
(CMI)



When you make reference to such project, there is no way not to feel so damn intimidated and intrigued in the same time because of the mystery discharged by Peter Andersson's music. I won't start making the apology of what RDE is or will be for the Dark Ambient scene, not right here! But I let you know that the five new tracks simply carry on the line of the previous album with one remark: this time the musical sequences are even more depressed and faded in sorrow. There is an everlasting enigma for me how Peter can blend so amazingly the bombastic atmosphere, which is produced by synthetic instruments, with introverted intricate effects… so cold… so frozen that you all of a sudden are surrounded by feelings of solitude, abandon, isolation and emptiness. Anyway, no matter what, there cannot be spoken about an accessible music and I think that all those who prefer such sonorities must be prepared for giving in… to those five new dimensions. I warn you of that as otherwise you might get freaked out very badly and your reaction would be out of control… and there is such mesmerizing power of despair. From a different perspective, I tell you, this is a masterpiece of the style and for this time you can enjoy two new natural instruments such as cymbal and trombone. The lay out and graphics are executed again by Roger Karmanik and symbolizes in a perfect match exactly what the whole album transposes: age of chaos! Rating: 0.92/1 (11.12)

RAJNA(FRA)-"The Door Of Serenity" CD'02 (12 tracks, 52. 03 min)
(HOLY)
Even if the album was released two years ago, I afford to mention about it since I believe it is the best achievement the two French had reached so far and, if I am not mistaken, this is the fourth album! More experimental than ever, with accentuated oriental influences, RAJNA had reached now a remarkable musical maturity since it is nothing but a brave disciple of DEAD CAN DANCE. It is about a different world, a different universe… a different life… and the female voice simply melts down your soul… Rating: 0.90/1 (20.01)

RAJNA(FRA)-"Hidden Temple" CD'04 (12 tracks, 58. 37 min)
(HOLY)
Promoters of DEAD CAND DANCE, the two musicians reveal a new sample of first rate Ethnic Gothic and the fifth album is rather identical with the previous one. It is a music out of the ordinary… trespassing mythological romantic and sensual elements... into an Afro-Asian world, from the old Egypt to ascetic mirage of Tibetan realm. Warm colors, oriental perfume, and profuse spirituality… everything is at superlative! The CD contains some bonuses including a video-clip with a live performance! 0.89/1 (19.02)

REVEREND BIZARRE(FIN)-"Harbinger Of Metal" CD'04 (7 tracks, 74. 00 min)
(SPIKEFARM)
Who would have thought there still are bands to promote grave Doom Metal… which was popular 20 years ago…?! The three Finns have released their second album and I can say it is a great sample of virtuosity having no new elements but featuring a marvelous successful mixture of styles (between chanted melodious peaceful ones and those aggressive noisy ones)… and the atmosphere thus created is so grave depressed and gloomy. We have here four extremely long tracks, which become even boring, and some other short ones but in lack of any structure. If you want to have an idea try to put in the same room bands like BLACK SABBATH, CATHEDRAL, ST. VITUS, RAVEN, TROUBLE, PENTAGRAM or SOLITUDE AETURNUS… and then you will know if the Finnish band is a success or not. I guess this could be a revelation for fans of the up mentioned bands and perhaps an interesting album (at most!) for the rest of us! www.reverend.shows.it Rating: 0.80/1 (21.02)

RIVENDELL(GER)-"Elven Tears" CD'03 (8 tracks, 47. 15 min)
(SKALDIC ART)



An impressing album if we take in consideration the person who is behind the name: a single character, Falagar. If the debut album, "The Ancient Glory", might have had some common Black Epic Metal sequences, well, the material is totally taken over by a Folk Viking aura and the sound is rather bombastic peaceful yet and meditative. It is, if you want, an ambitious replica to FALKENBACH, perhaps a little bit more Metallic and less atmospheric! RIVENDELL is focused on guitars' sound and the keyboard is a precious link to the strong masculine vocals and its assorted inflections. If we need to be critical on this material I'd say that the new compositions are in lack of strength and after a meticulous audition you come to realize that all the tracks look like the same and moreover, from time to time, the tunes make you fall asleep. However, this is an Epic Folk of a high quality, which, most certainly, will cause some troubles to the Medieval Black Metal followers but now it is in a version much too contemplative and calmer with hymns of a certain charm and lyrics of Tolkien themes. There is up to be mentioned that the percussion was accomplished by Boltthorn (VINDSVAL). http://listen.to/rivendell Rating: 0.87/1 (13.10)

SALTATIO MORTIS(GER)-"Erwachen" CD'04 (11 tracks, 48. 00 min)
(NAPALM)
The seven Germans bring up a new album following accurately the line of the previous one, meaning a kind of IN EXTREMO but in a more dynamic silhouette! In other words, I think that the mixture of Epic Punk with Electro Rock and Medieval develops a sound of Dark Ages in an evolved stage. I am not sure it is accurate what I tell you, but those old traditional instruments combined with synth and other contemporaneous elements put forth a very weird music… not to mention that the lyrics are in German…! The energy discharged I believe it has a certain purpose in the Germans' sound and I have a feeling this is the reason why they are so popular on the German market! As far as the band's imagery is regarded, I notice that the guys are pretty attentive at details and that medieval appearance plus traditional instruments… simply compile a specific original aura. As far as music is concerned, I can't see many differences from the debut (perhaps a little bit more melodic!) and that is why I find no interest in discussing it any further. www.saltatio-mortis.com Rating: 0.78/1 (14.02)

SCARVE(FRA)-"Irradiant" CD'04 (9 tracks, 42. 47 min)
(LISTENABLE/THE END)
It seems we have here a replica to ATHEIST or CYNIC but in a French version! It is the first album of this band that I happened to listen to but as a matter of fact this is their third! Anyway, I have not many to speak regarding an extremely complicated and elaborated Death Metal, even if it very aggressive and very melodic in the same time. I understand some members from DEFLESHED and MESHUGGAH also participated at this album therefore you can imagine how large is the "playground" of the six musicians… www.scarve.net Rating: 0.80/1 (20.01)

SECRET DISCOVERY(GER)-"Pray" CD'04 (12 tracks, 52. 23 min)
(E-WAVE)
After 15 years of activity it would be a little absurd to insist on details of band's history and discography. It is important that the Germans have returned with a new elegant sample of Gothic Rock full of atmospheric frames (an intelligent keyboard) and some commercial very rhythmic and melodic facets as well. Kai's low voice is as imposing as ever and the guitar riffs remind me SECRET DISCOVERY is still a Rock band. The tracks have lyrics in English, French and German as well, therefore we can speak of some experimental elements. It is a pleasant album professionally approached and interpreted but in lack of any new remarkable ingredients. www.secret-discovery.de Rating: 0.80/1 (28.01)

SEPSISM(USA)-"To Prevail In Disgust" CD'03 (10 tracks, 35. 12 min)
(FROM BEYOND)
This American band was founded in 1990 and until now they only managed for the past three years to release two albums. Right after they signed with the Dutch label, the four angry musicians entered the studio and recorded 10 new brutal and sick sequences in the spirit of no shade of kindness or indulgence! It is just Brutal Death Metal, in the old style of CANNIBAL CORPSE, with a throaty voice and explosive guitars. I haven't understood a thing from what they play now but I managed to virtually travel back in time when such sonorities were fans' delight! Well, for the time being their number is very limited in Europe but they still give a maximum audience in America! Probably this is a sensational album for those who live across the ocean! www.sepsism.net Rating: 0.78/1 (29.11)

SHADOW SEASON(NOR)-"The Frozen" MCD'03 (4 tracks, 20. 48 min)
(SOUND RIOT)
This is just another nordic Black Metal clone but this time coming through a collaboration of great names: Trym (EMPEROR/ZYKLON), Sanrabb (GEHENNA), Dolgar (FORLORN) beside the fundamental members, Void and Winter, both from WITCHHAMMER. During the two years of the band's existence, there were many who came and went like Kris Vold (DISMAL EUPHONY) or Nekro (GEHENNA). This very EP has four amazing Black/Dark Metal tracks, full of energy and expressiveness and with no compromises. There are some melodic shadows featured inside their tunes but the fundamental principle that governs their music is rapidity! The extreme vocals and an apocalyptic atmosphere remind me of that conventional Black Metal played a few years ago by bands such as: SATYRICON, EMPEROR or GEHENNA. Well, it is interesting to listen to it but solely for a single time! Rating: 0.78/1 (16.11)

SHADOWCAST(AUT)-"Near Life Experience" CD'03 (10 tracks, 50. 39 min)
(CCP)
Cyber Metal? This is really a strange definition… Anyway, ex-members of bands such as AMORTIS, CEPHALIC or ABIGOR have decided to make a proof of Gothic Metal with Power/ Progressive touches and deep roots in extremely brutal Metal. All in all, the male vocals gradation simply is the strongest element in this album structure, even if the screaming ones often try to imitate exactly what THE KOVENANT performs now. I could go even much further with the thought finding even instrumental elements in the sound of this Norwegian band. On the other hand, I'd say that Atmospheric Melodic Metal would be the most appropriate description for the sound since the keyboard is the instrument with a great abundance of bombastic passages. Moreover, the last part of the album features a dynamic and aggressive Electro-Industrial current. It actually is a modern version of Metal coming from these Austrian musicians but I think they should decide either melody or aggressiveness as you can't have all! From a different perspective I think this tends to become a clone for the new wave of synthetic Metal and -why not?- a pale copy for THE KOVENANT, which still preserves some different connections with other domestic styles. In other words, it is like trying to visit many places in the same time so that finally you may end up right in the middle of nowhere. I must say again, Moritz Neuner's battery execution is absolutely remarkable! http://go.to/shadowcast Rating: 0.81/1 (08.11)

SHADEWORKS(BEL)-"Sooty Limbs" demo CDR'01 (4 tracks, 18. 58 min)
Although it is an older material, I consider being right if reminding about it… since the Weird Atmospheric Metal background is an exceptional one with a clear Avantgarde note! The vocal assortment (male +female) indeed is ground-breaking and the Gothic Ethereal note interestingly gets blended with Metal or even Heavy touches… It is a pity that only four tracks are included on CDR and I still am stupefied as I don't understand how is it possible for a sound like that not convince any label. Well, it is true, this is not the best recording but both concept and orientation deserve maximum rate! Cheers to Nicolas Arnaud, a virtual colleague of mine who keeps alive a webzine as well: www.beyond.com www.hardebaran.com Rating: 0.84/1 (17.11)

SIEGFRIED(AUT)-"Eisenwinter" CD'03 (10 tracks, 45. 34 min)
(NAPALM)
Neither "Drachenberz" debut enchanted me and nor this material! Why so? I have no idea. I have read that the first CD was sold in 5000 copies, which honestly surprises me! Perhaps the advertising and the sonorous names behind the band counted that much!!! Well, it is about the most talented Austrian drum player, Moritz Neuner (ABIGOR/RIP, DARKWELL, SHADOWCAST…) and then it is about an old time bass player in Roland Wurzer person Wurzer (DARKWELL, ANGRY ANGELS) and of course, the female vocal, Sandra Schleret (ex-DREAMS OF SANITY). The lyrics are in German and speak about Nibelungs stories (without any reference to politics and religion). As far as music is regarded, this is an unfortunate and uninspired hotchpotch of too many styles and probably Epic Power Atmospheric Metal would be a succinct characterization to the sound. There are chanted vocals mixed with brutal ones throughout various musical influences, from extreme Metal to Melodic. As far as both execution and recording are concerned, I have only praising words. As for the message, I must say, they cannot pass my exam! It might happen for the fans to discover other valences of this style than what I found, this is a fact! But I better stop here… www.siegfried.at.tf Rating: 0.70/1 (22.09)

SILENTIUM(FIN)-"Sufferion-Hamartia Of Prudence" CD'03 (16 tracks, 68. 00 min)
(SPIKEFARM)



The third album of ex-FUNERAL band seems to be the most complex one! This comes as well with a certain length, numerous tracks…and all in all, it is a conceptual album with 10 long diverse tracks sometimes interrupted by impressing narrative interludes. In other words, after a complete audition you come to realize you actually passed through a whole legend or… in better words, this is just a theatrical art in a musical adaptation. I find difficult to appreciate if SILENTIUM sound remained or not Doom Metal or Gothic Metal since such substantial diversity doesn't help in accurately labelling the musical style. I only know that we can hear different male vocals, strange female ones, confusing choirs, funny tunes, an amazing keyboard…and perhaps solely the guitars' riffs would remind of SILENTIUM still as a Metal band. www.silentivm.com Rating: 0.87/1 (19.11)

SIRENIA(NOR)-"An Elixir For Existence" CD'04 (9 tracks, 53. 51 min)
(NAPALM)



I have waited for this album (belonging to Morten Veland's band -ex-TRISTANIA-) with great impatience and interest and I must say I really am pretty confused! Why so? Because I waited for much more of imagination and for some new elements! Unfortunately, the new tracks are pretty close to be identical with the ones featured on the debut and solely the vocal interchange plus contrasting concepts (melody versus aggressiveness, romantic/explosive) might be considered fundamental points for this sound! Even worse… for this time we miss Peter's magnificent violin and those passages with clear clean vocals… and those vocals used to get in resonance with the rest of instruments and actually managed to create a kind of stylistic equilibrium! There are some remains of violin from time to time but rather too faded and in lack of any charm! The album is based on a common effort of four musicians who are entertained by the usual choir mastered by synth. It would be a huge mistake to say it is not a good album! On the contrary, I listen to it with great pleasure and I really like it. Nevertheless, as far as I thought I knew Morten, I expected him to come with a real artistic "bomb"…both as music and concept "in se"… assuming he released the debut in a big haste…! Henrietta Bordvik's voice is rather too fragile and while listening to it… you might have the impression there is innocence itself down on earth! But here comes Morten in a very dynamic and aggressive manner with a voice in lack of any inflections but trying to impose a dark angry note to the sound. It is interesting to notice that the conceptual structure is still based on Gothic and many passages remind me of FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, but more likely as a Metallic cover version. I'd say that choirs remained a key element in SIRENIA's sound and I realize that Morten follows the same line he originated with TRISTANIA. "Star-Crossed" seems to be a great track and here… the male choirs simply mesmerize and give a thrilling note to an Atmospheric sound in Norwegian version! Otherwise… we have Metallic guitars, rhythmic battery, melodic explosive tunes and a bombastic keyboard! This is just another sample of first class Norwegian Black Gothic Metal, which keeps catching up with today's fashion! www.sirenia.no Rating: 0.90/1 (10.01)

SKEPTICISM(FIN)-"Farmakon" CD'03 (6 tracks, 62. 20 min)
(RED STREAM)
What can you expect from SKEPTICISM? Funeral Slow Doom Metal in the purest and most extreme nature! The third album of the Finns is the most complex, dark and profound one and I guess that violent angry voice can awake even the dead! This is painted in a morbid, introverted environment having a well calculated number of tracks but rather too long for a too slow background, guitars with prolonged solos, a medieval keyboard and an atypical battery. Well…after such audition, you better get out and take a deep breath of fresh air, otherwise who knows what madness might get into you! www.farmakon.com Rating: 0.80/1 (01.12)

SKYFIRE(SWE)-"Mind_Revolution" CD'03 (9 tracks, 43. 39 min)
(HAMMERHEART)
Another clone of Swedish Melodic Death Metal School! If you got bored of listening to DARK TRANQUILITY or IN FLAMES you can try SKYFIRE. Although they are at their second album, the Swedes prove an amazing maturity in execution! The arrangement of melodiousness and aggressiveness is pointed out throughout a great contrast of ravishing guitars riffs and an amazing atmosphere created by two well handled keyboards. The screaming vocals are perfectly framed in the Swedish Metal style so that the new tracks take benefit of irreproachable arrangement, mixing and approach! This is a hearty album discharging lots of energy and strength and I might even say that, unfortunately, there is an inflation of good bands adopting the same line. But who can tell what bright future this band might reach?! Rating: 0.78/1 (22.09)

SORATH(CZE)-"Vivimos En Perpetua Guerra" CD'03 (11 tracks, 34. 22 min)
(METAL BREATH)
Again we meet Black Metal, but this time not in a Nordic manner, which in my eyes is a great advantage! Well, I am afraid this would be the only advantage! Why so? Well, even if SORATH has a remarkable history with more than 10 years of successful activity, they still relate themselves at a brutal Metal, in lack of any brilliant idea and with no shade of originality. The four try to cover plenty of openings, styles and influences but with a confusing result ending up in a modest outcome in lack of any expressiveness. It is the Czechs' third material and perhaps some of you might find more positive details in what they play… while I couldn't. http://sorath.wz.cz Rating: 0.74/1 (16.12)

SPEAKING SILENCE(FRA)-"The Twilight World" CD'03 (11 tracks, 51. 55 min)
(HAR/SACRAL)
Carla and Alain have reached the third album in more than 10 years of activity under the same banner. Carla has played as well in TREES DANCE but, after a short experience, she focused solely on this band! What could I tell you about this music?! Pop Gothic Rock Atmospheric might be a guiding point… Carla's crystalline voice is indeed special, elegant and impressive! The whole sound seems to mold on her voice and even if the rhythmic sound is simplistically conceived, in a commercial way, there is something attractive there! The lyrics are both in English and French and I think that the guitar is the perfect companion for Carla's voice! I wouldn't say this duet is extraordinary but it is away above the medium! I am surprised they didn't reach a more serious contract so far as they could use a better promotion activity! Rating: 0.84/1 (09.01)

STILLE OPRRORR(NOR)-s/t CD'02 (8 tracks, 47. 09 min)
The talented guitar player, Christer Andre Cederberg, famous for his intense endeavor along IN THE WOODS… (RIP), has released, two years ago, an extremely weird and intricate album… with no connection to Metal music! It is a relaxing calm music, based solely on guitar, both female and male vocals, pale battery, a sinister keyboard, and a great sax but in lack of rhythm or tempo… I'd say it is a meditative sound reaching for Rock, Progressive or Jazz… all in an original attractive profile. I have listened to the album for quite some times now and I still haven't realized what Christer wanted to express with such sound! I recently have listened

to the compilation Karmakosmetix released and there Christer features two new compositions… well, they seem more dynamic and entertaining than what I've met here. I am curious to hear all his new compositions, which I am sure will include various influences since he has just returned from a long journey in South Asia, where he faced a great impact meeting traditions from countries such as Thailand, Cambodia… etc Maybe I should say something about his other project, ANIMAL ALPHA, which is more Rock… perhaps to Power, more commercial, with an extremely aggressive female voice, especially since both bands came to release a demo in partnership. For any further - information, visit www.animalalpha.com Rating: 0.81/1 (12.01)

STILLE VOLK(FRA)-"Maudat" CD'03 (10 tracks, 45. 00 min)
(HOLY)
You cannot imagine what means to follow a traditional line! These French musicians keep on walking on the same ground of neo-Celtic-medieval realms presenting now the fourth musical chapter and everything is as charming as so far, just like the other albums! With a sound created by instruments new and old since the beginning of time (bagpipes, bouzouki, hurdy-gurdy, Arabic lute, violin, mandolin, various flutes), the French band brings forth a medieval music exceptionally well conceived on an acoustic backbone of a tremendous emergence. I can't say it is better than the others since my ears actually cannot distinguish major differences between them. I only know it is a music that has nothing to do with Metal or Rock…but rather with something derived from a traditional Ethno. If you never listened to STILLE VOLK, I recommend you would… at least from a curious impulse! stilleroques@yahoo.fr Rating: 0.79/1 (18.10)

STROMMOUSSHELD(POL)-"Behind The Curtain" CD'03 (9 tracks, 60. 30 min)
(AVANTGARDE)



I'd say this is an intelligent project as far as orientation is the issue! It is a pity though that the production and mixing are quite not ok…Started on a Dark Industrial basis, the project enters many other realms such as Electro, Gothic, Psychedelic, Black or Ambient. Let me put it differently, if you like bands like ABORYM, RED HARVEST or THEE MALDOROR KOLLECTIVE, then you would also enjoy this very album. There is a similitude with SAMAEL but I must say that these symphonic make of it a pretty hard and less accessible album, difficult to digest it in most parts and probably rather too complex. I'd recommend for indulgence in appreciating this band because in other technical conditions, I assure you, their music would enchant anyone! The voice is sometimes rather too aggressive but I put it on the Black tendencies' behalf! I think a remarkable aspect would be the interludes created by guitars and clear vocals in a pleasant contrast with the rest of the noises and multiple effects. The band's members have played in other projects as well such as: BRACTWO CZARNEJ ROZY, DARK GALLERY or SIRIUS. www.sh.art.pl Rating: 0.81/1 (04.11)

STYGGMYR(NOR)-"World Massacre" CD'03 (11 tracks, 31. 31 min)
(FACE FRONT)
I really have no clue why this band exist and which is its purpose of existence… as long as what these musicians play seriously turns my face to the past… those times when the crown belonged to old school Raw Black Metal!!! And keep in mind, we have here a band that was just founded and this is its very debut! Therefore, STYGGMYR sound would be somewhere close to SLAYER, MOTORHEAD, TWISTED SISTER and even DARK THORNE but having as well some hues rather hilarious of Rock'n Roll… Even the recording meets the same primitive background with scratched guitars and brutal battery. Monotonous! Rating: 0.77/1 (22.11)

SUBTERRANEAN MASQUERADE(USA)-"Temporary Psychotic State" MCD'04 (2 tracks, 17. 23 min)
(THE END)
Great surprise! This is an interesting approach Tomer Pink adopted! I don't know if I ever listened to something like this so far but I find here many elements from various spheres: Metal, Progressive, Rock, Dark, Doom or Atmospheric… and I think it is only natural since the project is formed by members of bands like: AGALLOCH, NOVEMBERS DOOM, EPOCH OF UNLIGHT, ANIMA NERA or THE KILL… Piano, violins, synth, clear vocals and extreme ones, folkloric female ensemble, guitars IN THE WOODS… like, meditative obscure sober and mystic atmosphere! I did enjoy the idea! However the two tracks, even if pretty long and elaborated, are not just enough to get a clear idea or opinion about this debutant band! Rating: 0.85/1 (19.02)

SUMMONER(ITA)-"Winter Solstice" CD'03 (8 tracks, 43. 14 min)
(BLACK TEARS OF DEATH)
These young Italians experiment a Gothic Death Metal dimension with serious touches of Black, Doom or Atmospheric Metal. I tell you sincerely there is nothing new and everything seems to be a copy/paste from the fashionable bands, with no other improvisation. Therefore, there is nothing but a melodic atmospheric and entertaining Metal. One notice: for this album there are two guest musicians, Dhilorz/ANCIENT and Daniel Botti/NODE. www.summonersite.com Rating: 0.79/1 (17.11)

SVARTSYN(SWE)-"Destruction Of Man" CD'03 (7 tracks, 41. 31 min)
(SOUND RIOT)
What can you expect from an ex-drum player from DARK FUNERAL, Draugen?! Beside Ornias, he connects us to the sound of some classical Black Metal bands such as: MAYHEM, MARDUK or DARK THRONE. Although they have come to the fourth album, after more than 12 years of experience in this field, the ex-CHALICE members have no desire in being influenced by any bombastic element of fashion, this is why the seven sequences are ultra-fast, brutal… really noisy and thus pretty linear. How come that the two musicians did not get bored during those 40 minutes of Evil Raw Black Metal? I have no clue, but it is true, I haven't understood too much from an album that might have meant something but… a decade ago! Today… perhaps there could be found some nostalgic people to sigh after… but with a great difficulty! www.soundriot.net Rating: 0.78/1 (02.12)

SWALLOW THE SUN(FIN)-"The Morning Never Came" CD'03 (8 tracks, 56. 32 min)
(FIREBOX)
Sometimes I wonder how happen that such a small country like Finland could host that many Doom Death bands! From UNHOLY to la SKEPTICISM, the range of Funeral Slow Doom Death Metal has been covered and covered by dozens if not hundreds of bands. In this particular case, we can have a look at the remains of two underground projects, FUNERIS NOCTURNUM and PLUTONIUM ORANGE. But I find strange the fact that even if founded three years ago, the band has only this year released the first demo and right after… they received a good offer from Firebox label. As far as music is regarded the Finns perform a classical Doom Death Metal with various approaches becoming from time to time either atmospheric, either primitive, either lent or too aggressive, with Gothic influences but having as well some depressive valences. The voice oscillates between brutal and clear but the guitars are constant in following those never-ending buzzes, the keyboard fills the background while the battery seems not to pursue any standard rhythm. It is a nice album with a common Metal memorandum and modern spirit but that would be about all! And I am sure, something is missing, something to bring the band's identity in sound. Rating: 0.78/1 (01.11)

SWAN CHRISTY(GRE)-"Julian" CD'03 (9 tracks, 40. 02 min)
(THE END/BLACK LOTUS)
Well, this is indeed a genuine elegant and impressive weirdness! I think this band should be regarded as one composing soundtracks and definitely not Metal sonorities! On this very album, there are neither guitars nor battery; therefore it is pretty clear it has nothing to do with Metal music. The synthetic sound is guided by some clear pleasant voices and a hallucinating piano intersecting a chaotic synth. It is a kind of symphonic Progressive with Electro elements and avant-garde frames, which, in the end, does not resemble with anything I listened so far. This Soundtrack of Schizophrenic movie indeed fascinated me but I believe it has no relevance to speak about it any further… not in here, where Metal is the main topic. It is about something else, a different kind of music, which deserves all the attention and it is worth to listen to but I believe it is not the point to compare it with extreme sonorities! Rating: 0.89/1 (01.02)

TAOS(FRA)-"Darkness Dealer" CD'03 (7 tracks, 35. 27 min)
(SACRAL)
This time Sacral disappointed me because here is nothing special coming from his trio but a brutal primitive and a creaky background, it is about a so-called Cult Black Metal! Well, this style simply doesn't ring any bell to me especially when I talk about new bands! I really don't see the point of starting a new band and then playing something already experimented by others long time ago… in a more brutal manner: DARK THRONE, MAYHEM or BURZUM. Perhaps this is dedicated solely to the nostalgic people who loved the type! Rating: 0.71/1 (28.11)

THE BEAT OF BLACK WINGS(GER)-"Kontemplation " CD'03 (19 tracks, 78. 47 min)
Dark Instrumental Music for meditation! This is the statement Eric Schurmann, the band's leader made. Right after an album officially released at a German label, the band tried to find a more attractive offer for a new composition. This is why we can enjoy now this very compilation. To be more precise, this is a collection of old and new tracks, a kind of bridge between the beginning sound and the actual one. I must admit I really enjoyed listening to this material even if all tracks are so different one from each other. Beside an abundant keyboard, there are a cold impressive male voice and a female one, which gives colour to the whole given atmosphere, male choirs, violin, guitars and a beautiful flute! This is an intriguing music, which deserves our future attention! www.the-beat-of-black-wings.de Rating: 0.80/1 (12.01)

THE BEYOND(ROM)-"Noise Pollution" CDR'02 (15 tracks, 63. 43 min)
The Romanian scene is poor and poorer in Dark Ambient Industrial projects and I know none to be mentioned here beside THY VEILS. Radu Craciunica has the ambition of bringing up an interesting debut, pretty long one, based on a computerized sound featuring a mixture of Ambient, Noise and Industrial. I find here some medieval frames or even military marches… all in a very futurist shape! This material did not strike me but neither disappointed me! For a debut, I think it is OK, for an Industrial sound… there is much to work at… but let's wait and see what happens on the second material, which is in progress, as I understood. thebeyondproject@hotmail.com Rating: 0.78/1 (15.12)

THE HOUSE OF USHER(GER)-"Inferno/L'enfer" CD'03 (13 tracks, 78. 58 min)
(EQUINOXE)
Gothic Rock in a classical elegant manner… very rhythmic and full of energy but definitely not Dark. I think a resemblance with HIM or The 69 EYES is desired. Hmmmm, I wouldn't be that sure about that, but probably thanks to the excessively commercial rhythm… there might be found some convergences and maybe the five musicians could be in concurrence and competition in the same time with the bands up mentioned. During the ten years of activity, the band succeeded to play/sustain live performances in various famous Gothic locations in Europe and I believe that their fourth album shall have the same success both in live performances and as a studio product. The last track, "Die Hoelle", actually is a radio-play making reference to "L'enfer" novel, recited on two voices (male ones) but unfortunately… in German only. www.the-house-of-usher.de Rating: 0.81/1 (30.11)

THE GATHERING(HOL)-"Souvenirs" CD'03 (8 tracks, 49. 51 min)
(THE END)
Is there anyone not to know about this band? During the time, the Dutch musicians had changed the sound, direction and look

over and over again so that I find at least difficult to say if they ever played Metal tunes. What they come to point out now it is called Alternative Rock/Triprock, a strange mixture of both organic and electronic sounds with serious hues of psychedelic echoes, perhaps a Trip-Hop with Space-Rock influences. Anneke's voice is as strong and passionate as ever and I must confess that the experience of collaboration with Trickster G (ULVER) in the last track is at least inedited. People say this must be the best album of the five musicians. Well, for a pub music and atmosphere, the new tracks seem just perfect, no objection about that! The shy shadows of Dark seem to hardly face the new tendency and, once again, THE GATHERING makes the proof the band has quitted that peculiar underground spirit, the one which made them famous. There might be a subjective nostalgia that keeps me immune to new alternative sonorities but I wouldn't know for sure! What I know is that the music didn't disturb anyone around me while playing but again... it didn't strike either! Rating: 0.81/1 (29.06)

THE KOVENANT(NOR)-"S.E.T.I" CD'03 (12 tracks, 67. 36 min)
(NUCLEAR BLAST)



One of the most avant-gardes bands on the Metal scene, which seems to have decided to leave the dark tough underground orientation exploring now new commercial territories more appreciated and consumed these days. Otherwise, THE KOVENANT has offered, during the years, various albums, starting with the brilliant "In Times Before The Light" or an inspired "Nexus Polaris" and an electro Black Metal album such as "Animatronic". Re-printing the debut of last year, under Hammerheart label, provides a modern sound, with synthetizer, various effects and distorted voices. The new album seems to have as basis solely "Animatronic" album, while the effects resemble with the re-mastering of the debut. The Cyber element, mixed with electro frames of avant-garde, simply masters the whole sound, while spatial atmospheric passages or oriental or even Power Metal, Punk and Funk influences often interrupt the explosive rhythm. The staccato rhythm tends to unveil a new face of the Norwegians' music, clear, sober voices merely remind of DEPECHE MODE at the same time as the distorted and aggressive ones seem to communicate in a weird manner with a resonant keyboard and various female vocals passing from opera, melodic until tribal or Byzantine profiles. The album is for sure very well conceived and performed, having probably as target fans of EBM or even LAIBACH. From the Metallic perspective, "S.E.T.I." is a Disco-Electro-Power parody, a little funny and explosive, discharging a fantastic energy. What I can say for sure is that the synth/keyb dimensions are amazing and the guitars' riffs, although vindictive and noisy, plainly offer to the listener a unique and dynamic mood. From a different point of view, this album could be a challenge for those who are looking for a change, freshness or tricky rhythms. However, I am not attracted to such sonorities... on the contrary... I find them rather puerile and simplistic but THE KOVENANT actually proved me that I could listen to an album for more than 3 consecutively days. Either I became one of them... or the album really deserves more than subjective critics... I would not know for sure! Nevertheless, the band has nothing in common with -indulgently said- the Metallic one! It is rather too soft for the Black people and too noisy for the Electro camp... Yet, it is a challenge and it is worth it! Rating: 0.87/1 (09.02)

THE MEADS OF ASPHODEL(UK)-"Exhuming The Grave Of Yeshua" CD'03 (11 tracks, 61. 13 min)
(SUPERNAL)

The second album of these English actually shocked me indeed! If we take a look at it, from a stylistic perspective...I have no doubts in telling it is out of any comparison and definitely one of a kind! As far as the execution is regarded, there is no reproach to be made! About the sound... well, would it be Black Metal or not?! I think it is rather too knotty and out of any patterns to be labeled that easy...! From time to time I can hear some solos of progressive guitars, traditional Oriental touches, imposing clear voices... followed by primitive guitars and angry screaming vocals on a sick noisy and confusing background. Perhaps it is an album surpassing any sphere of imagination... more than an Avantgarde one... in lack of classical valences... Thus I find difficult to frame it somewhere... but I definitely wouldn't say Black Metal! This is a real challenge and I believe you should try it by all means... at least because of curiosity! As an inconvenient I would mention that the stylistic variety may risk to confuse the listener and thus to finally lose him on the way! Rating: 0.84/1 (07.01)

THE SOIL BLEEDS BLACK(USA)-"Mirror Of The Middle Ages" CD'04 (12 tracks, 50. 12 min)
(THE FOSSIL DUNGEON)

The Riddick brothers have reprinted the sixth album on CD with a spectacular but decent artwork. It is very hard not to recognize TSBB once you listened to in the past! The medieval atmosphere you entered by listening to it... drags you out of all surroundings... It is about archaic elements, calm voices, folk passages... which generate an elevated aura with deep roots in a Renaissance past or in Dark Ages... It is an album dedicated especially to all fans devoted to such sonorities! For all the rest, it might be solely an experience awaking some interest and at most respect! www.soilbleedsblack.com Rating: 0.83/1 (01.03)

THE VISION BLEAK(GER)-s/t MCD'03 (2 tracks, 10. 04 min)
(PROPHECY)

Oh my god, what power adrenaline and dynamism! This Dark Rock project belonging to EMPYRIUM's leader seems to break all tops and this is a certified position since the two tracks enclosed in this very single are just amazing and fascinating! Electro, Rock, Dark, Horror, Atmospheric... situated right between the limits of Metal and Rock or maybe... DEPECHE MODE or SISTERS OF MERCY! What could be more provocative than to listen to DEPECHE MODE in a Metal version? I am keen to listen to their debut, really interested in it and I recommend you not to miss it either! www.the-vision-bleak.de Rating: 0.84/1 (15.09)

THE WAKE(FIN)-"Ode To My Misery" CD'03 (10 tracks, 41. 54 min)
(SPIKEFARM)

This is just another band coming from Finish Metal factory! Having some guiding lines in old AMORPHIS and in the fastness of CHILDREN OF BODOM, the four musicians point up now a fresh album, very explosive, with plenty melodious parts, all framed in that Black/Death Metal used by hundreds bands. Isn't it obvious enough? Let's make it: Heavy Speed Metal riffs, a drum machine in flames, grave bass, and screamed antagonistic vocals and... that would be almost all they can. Sincerely, I am fed up with so many Melodic Death Metal clones! Gentlemen, please, come up with some innovation as well! It is not enough to perform an excellent execution... at least not for me! If we need to be more indulgent, I think we could accept that it is about an encouraging debut belonging to four talented musicians who are first of all devoted to a style already too exploited and too much spoken about! ! www.the-wake.com. Rating: 0.79/1 (04.11)

THYRANE(FIN)-"Hypnotic" CD'03 (10 tracks, 50. 47 min)
(SPIKEFARM)

The four Finns come back in forth with a new material full of various Metal influences and some Black Metal as well. The keyboard grants an avant-garde note while the guitars focus on Heavy Metal. The Black vocals remind me that THYRANE still is both an angry and serious band. Since the synth parts are performed by a female, Mannamari, you can imagine what an atmospheric note it gives to the sound not to mention that the Space/Electro effects actually send me to a kind of more dynamic and rhythmic THE KOVENANT. In other words, the Power shades sometimes dominate the sound yet the Black Metal persists in the same bombastic and expressive profile. This is an album extremely well elaborated but nothing more or less. Rating: 0.78/1 (17.09)

TO/DIE/FOR(FIN)-"Jaded" CD'03 (10 tracks, 44. 00 min)
(SPINEFARM)

HIM phobia is pretty outlined all over the Europe and specially in Finland. Perhaps this is the reason why many bands dream on a career as "bright" as HIM's but turn out to accept a compromise. That is to give up to some elementary notions of extreme Metal in favour to those commercial, rhythmic and danceable ones. If the voice happens to be sensual as well, lightly baritone but clear, then... the chickens should fall back while the "machos"... could bend! Well, I don't know...I am not keen to write about these styles because I find them superficial and "built on getting our money from the pocket". If I say as well that the Finns have on each of the there albums at least a couple of covers, then it is absolutely clear what target they have. Therefore, we have here Gothic Rock/Metal and in abundance Pop as well, starting with HIM and ending with THE 69 EYES. It is excellent for driving, audition in a pub but not recommended while home and alone within the four walls! The band's fans sustain this is the best and most inspired; frankly I found all of three albums pretty much the same. Or maybe this is more Disco than the others... yes, this might be the difference! www.todieforlove.com Rating: 0.76/1 (18.09)

TOMORROW'S EVE(GER)-"Mirror Of Creation" CD'03 (13 tracks, 70. 22 min)
(SOURCE OF DELUGE)

What I heard here has nothing to do with the Metal music I usually promote/review and I must confess Power Progressive Metal is a too "lightened" style for my tastes. All who gravitate around DREAM THEATRE can have a try with this project: it is the second album of the band, full of atmosphere, intense keyboards, elaborated guitars, classical Progressive vocals and very long good tracks. Well it is obvious, they are very skillful with the instruments... but unfortunately, this is not my cup of tea. www.tomorrows-eve.de Rating: 0.77/1 (03.12)

TORTURE KILLER(FIN)-"For Maggots to Devour" CD'03 (9 tracks, 34. 29 min)
(KARMAGEDDON MEDIA)

This is just another band born too late! How many Death Metal bands can actually be in this world? And how come that they succeed to receive offer of such calibre! I admit that such combination of OBITUARY and MACABRE, in a Finnish version, sounds absolutely fine but there is still no new element or authentic, nothing to build an identity that could delineate it from the army of common bands! The only element that might get speculated in this situation might be the origin of this band, Finland, and... it is true, it is a little uncommon for a Nordic band to put in a Nordic version a sound resembling to DEICIDE, MORTICIAN, IMPALED, NILE or CANNIBAL CORPSE! But otherwise, I'd say it is an album of "wear and tear", which probably shall receive lots of great appraisal in the Death Metal magazines but which might get forgotten very fast. www.torture-killer.cjb.net Rating: 0.75/1 (13.10)

TRISTITIA(SWE)-"Garden Of Darkness" CD'03 (9 tracks, 58. 22 min)
(HOLY)

Galvez and his team stay in the same lent depressive Doom Death Dark Metal with funeral tents and long-lasting guitar riffs. If eight years ago the debut was a real amazing surprise, now, TRISTITIA brings forward a pale album, in lack of freshness, pretty resembling with the previous materials and with rather no major differences. Even the male vocals are now consumed and with no energy and I might say that the only positive thing that happened here is Luis B. Galvez' Heavy classic guitar. This is a package of new tracks but the truth is that, in shape and essence, they simply are in the old style. This is a pity, I do believe that TRISTITIA's road ends right here. At least as far as I am concerned... Rating: 0.71/1 (06.07)

TRONUL ASCUNS(ROM)-"Astrele Danseaza" demo CD'03 (10 tracks, 43. 06 min)

In a previous issue I have written about this project and I remem-

ber that the entire characterization was a little bit confused. This time Lucian comes out with the best material he ever conceived, both in concept and execution! I still consider a tremendous loss not to have voice included as I think such would provide a personal and proper sound. Well, it is again Ambient with fragile touches of Neo Industrial delicately wrapped in a Dark silhouette with awkward rhythms… sometimes staccato ones. "Tron peste abis" (Throne over the Abyss) is a very long track (appreciatively 9 minutes) of a certain elegance and indeed different from the others. I think I wouldn't be wrong if saying there are touches of ARCANA, RAISON D' ETRE or other projects from CMI yet the most important thing is that the sound is more intelligible and perhaps more attractive that what I have listened so far. The booklet contains some extremely appealing sketches/drawings! http://tronulascuns.kos.ro Rating: 0.83/1 (18.01)

TVANGESTE(RUS)-"Firestorm" CD'03 (8 tracks, 44. 43 min)
(WORLD CHAOS)



This is finally something to "feed" my soul! And I am not speaking necessarily about audition only but as concept and execution while the inspiration is at its most! Orchestration Black Metal! What could be more serious than a collaboration of some young musicians devoted to extreme Metal tunes with symphonic orchestras or professional classic choirs!? Even if this is not quite unique on the Metal scene, this album has a certain charm and the classical or even the symphonic touches weight more than expected in TVANGESTE's sound economy. If the debut album insists as well on Epic Doom Death Metal sequences, the new material is focused solely on bombastic Black Metal full of atmosphere and Epic echoes yet featuring as well demonic vocals as in CRADLE OF FILTH manner. The contrast comes from those superb choirs who give such amazing sobriety and a certain value to Metal music so that the final result is really great! If I really intend to be a nasty character, I'd say that the Classic/Metal harmony is not that well balanced but I am sure that my ears as well must become acquainted with such mixing and approaches! This surely is a reference album for modern Black Metal and I advice you not to miss it! www.tvangeste.com Rating: 0.86/1 (04.11)

TYRANNY(FIN)-"Bleak Vistae" MCD'04 (3 tracks, 44. 42 min)
(FIREBOX)

Funeral Doom Metal in superlative terms! WINTER, SKEPTICISM, DISEMBOWELMENT...they are all in one, into a sinister sound with such a mesmerizing piano than even the dead may rise from the grave, a sick throaty voice and extremely slow and depressive guitars. The slow rhythm is outlined by a lethargic battery following an extremely weird beat… like wandering in a dark place where no sign of life dwells! When I think about it… and realize it is just a debut MCD of the two Finns… I get scared of what may follow! Most certainly, fans of such sonorities will feed their egos with such outcome, which seems to never end… Well, this is the weak point: too long and common tracks even if the atmosphere is simply specific to such type of music! After two consecutive auditions I actually lost my patience! I really would need a certain special mood for such as otherwise I would start looking for a knife to cut my veins! Uhhhh! Rating: 0.80/1 (28.01)

UHRILEHTO(FIN)-"Vitutus Millennium" CD'03 (11 tracks, 52. 27 min)
(SCHWARZDORN)

The signing with Cold Blood Industries was not the most successful one… therefore the four musicians opt for the German label for the second album! It is so painful to discover day by day bands that have nothing in common with originality and I find a little too lingering and boring to listen and review the same Dark Black Metal pattern. Although the sound is an atmospheric one, with abundant keyboard and extremely melodic guitars, an aggressive linear voice there is practically nothing else to bring a shade of novelty to this musical style. It is just a fashionable album, in lack of inspiration but executed with passion. Should it be sufficient? http://uhrilehto.cjb.net Rating: 0.80/1 (02.12)

ULVER(NOR)-"A Quick Fix Of Melancholy" CD'03 (4 tracks, 23. 09 min)
(THE END)



Garm proves one again he is a real maestro with instruments and in vocalizing! Even if the actual synthetic sound has nothing to do with what ULVER used to perform, the music now is, in fact, a kind of soundtrack, well dimensioned and uniformly distributed in the tracks' length. Garm's opera voice is indeed amazing on "Vowels", which is the most bombastic sequence of the EP! I'd say that even "Little Blue Bird" tries to preserve something from the up mentioned one yet the dynamics is focused on acoustic touches. "Doom Sticks" doesn't impress by melodiousness but rather by effects and noises while "Eitttlane" is actually a remixed track from "Kveldssanger" album in 1995. This is a strange, sinister music but elegant! It is a pity that the material is too succinct! www.jester-records.com Rating: 0.95/1 (08.11)

UNMOORED(SWE)-"Indefinite Soul-Extension" CD'03 (8 tracks, 45. 37 min)
(CODE666)

I remember that the first two albums released at Pulverized Records meant not too much for me although it was about a Death Metal well executed. Once signing a new contract The Swedes have changed a bit their orientation, something which might be seen either good or bad. If good: besides a brutal aggressive Swedish Death Metal we have here some super-melodic elements even Progressive ones in OPETH manner. IF bad: all transitions from violence to melody are rather too brutal inducing a state of an album framed in two distinct parts by using the already classical system "copy-paste"… I find hard to say more about this album… finally I think it is an album of transition! The musical aptitudes of the three are remarkable…but nothing else! www.unmoored.com Rating: 0.78/1 (21.02)

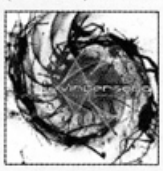
UNSILENCE(UK)-"A Walk Through Oceans'03 (4 tracks, 30. 31 min)
(GOLDEN LAKE)

This is another band with more than 10 years of activity but a humble discography in the background. If I am not mistaken this should be the second MCD of the band. The five British musicians light into a classical Doom Metal with Rock touches falling into CANDLEMASS, CATHEDRAL or SERENADE dimensions. The clear voice is in tandem with prolonged guitar riffs, the battery is not that fast while the keyboard simply brings colour to a sound which is rather sad peaceful and atmospheric. It is something pretty familiar 15 years ago but which, in time, faded and got lost by all means. From a different perspective, the four tracks are rather long but indeed can stand for good outcome. www.unsilence.co.uk Rating: 0.80/1 (06.11)

VED BUENS ENDE…(NOR)-"Written In Waters" CD'03 (9 tracks, 57. 12 min)
(CANDLELIGHT)

This is a new reprint of a marvellous album. The avant-garde and Black Metal mixture they created many years ago is still a trial for many musicians. If Misanthropy was the label who made famous bands such as BURZUM, IN THE WOODS… or MONUMENTUM by that time… well, you can imagine then the impact of this release. It is one of the best extreme Metal albums so far and this new booklet makes available for you the lyrics as well plus a few, VERY FEW technical details. Anyway, this is a piece of collection and other supplementary details are meaningless! (29.06)

VINTERSORG(SWE)-"The Focusing Blur" CD'04 (12 tracks, 53. 55 min)
(NAPALM)



The fifth album is even more knotty and weirder than the previous ones all together! Having many common points with the previous sequences released in 2002, the new material features as special guests two famous musicians: Asgeir Mickelson and Steve Di Giorgio thus the final sound is simply exceptional! If the first three albums could be framed somewhere in a Folk Metal, well… the fourth was just a bridge to this one, which is without doubt, a veritable sample of Metal. I wouldn't know if Heavy, Progressive, Folk or Atmospheric Metal! The clear voice reminds me of YES and the melodic passages sound so Rock that you couldn't come to admit VINTERSORG would be a Metal band! The truth is that the keyboard is handled with such a fine grace (making clear references to the 70's music) and the psychedelic elements… all together… come to impress me. And after that, there are obvious extreme and aggressive Metal progressions, with brutal vocals… coming over you… and they leave you perplex. It is an overwhelming album like an invitation to a unique imaginary world, encompassing various stylistic elements of a great complexity. It is by far the best release Mr. Vintersorg ever had and throughout such he proves there are no stylistic borders or limits in music and it finally is a comprehensible proof that evolution means and equals to change! If we compare this product solely to the previous album, then we might say that these 12 new tracks are more melodic, more peaceful and Progressive. It is a first rate sample of Metal, which may not impress the fans since there is not pattern for such… and no standard in Metal for these musicians to respect or follow! And, frankly, it cannot be compared with any other band ever! They trespassed all Metal boundaries ever existed… www.vintersorg.com Rating: 0.89/1 (10.01)

VIRGIN BLACK(AUS)-"Elegant… and Dying" CD'03 (9 tracks, 74. 27 min)
(THE END)

Epic Symphonic Classical Gothic Metal! Sober, romantic, depressive, majestic and still Metallic…, this should be a succinct characterization of the Australians' material. I am not willing to hide that I found their debut quite on my taste and thus an interview with Rowan and Samantha also featured in Kogaionon #6. If you haven't listened to VIRGIN BLACK by now, then I do recommend you would right away! It is something exquisite! The new tracks are more dramatic and profound than the previous one but rather too intricate and complex, with too many stylistic directions. At a certain point, the guitars' noise is annoying, especially in contrast with Rowan's superb clear and imposing vocals. In fact, the whole atmosphere is dominated by meditative Gothic that requires respect at first. I would like to listen to a softer sound…simpler and with different arrangements. I guess it would make it more digestible and comfortable. Otherwise, the album is a special one, no doubt, with a remarkable theatrical aura and a recording in a higher quality. Do not lose this sample of creativity even if it is not exactly a musical masterpiece! Rating: 0.80/1 (07.07)

WASTEFORM(USA)-"Ignorance Through Sovereignt" CD'03 (10 tracks, 38. 39 min)
(XTREEM)

Again Death Metal and again SUFFOCATION, DYING FETUS, INTERNAL BLEEDING or SKINLESS influences… Founded in 2000, the Americans manage to release in three years two albums and a split, which is not bad at all! It is about an extreme style of first rate, very fast and with certain skillfulness in the technique but nothing more! Sick riot, inferno in its very cradle… and other super-known details… www.wasteform.com Rating: 0.75/1 (28.01)

WIDE OPEN WINGS(ROM)-"Wingswork" demo CD'04 (9 tracks, 41. 48 min)

Lus, my friend, still explores inner fields of The Self and so decided it would be about time to divide musical inspiration into two ambient projects: TRONUL ASCUNS and WOW. If about the first one you have just read a review, regarding this project I have not too much to say. Why so? Because it is the same approach, namely music created on computer, in lack of vocals, with a structure of classic Dark Ambient, now with more pronounced touch of a melodic dimension, which makes of the album a more accessible audition. You need a certain special mood in order to listen to such music! The most impor-

tant things is that you can notice now a straight evolution of the sound and I think you shouldn't miss this project for the future as you can never know what it may bring up! Lus29@rol.ro http://wideopenwings.kos.ro/ Rating: 0.78/1 (17.01)

WINDIR(NOR)-"Likferd" CD'03 (8 tracks, 48. 43 min)
(VME)



Valfar seems to know what a team should be like! After two solo albums he contacted ULCUS' members and in year 2001 the "1184" album, a really Viking Folk Black Metal masterpiece is released. Right after two years, the six musicians bring forth an album even more aggressive and faster than the previous ones and I must say that today's Symphonic Black Metal obviously eclipses their initial Viking valences. As for the execution… trust me, WINDIR has gathered the maximum mark! And this goes as well for the energy discharged, rhythm and expressiveness! Even the synth seems to be connected to high voltage! Black vocals, in a classical Black Metal manner, interweave the instruments' parts while the drums won't leave either a chance to an atmospheric feeling! I'd say that Heavy must be the core filled in the new WINDIR sound as the basic Black Metal simply is identical with what other Norwegian bands perform. Probably here from comes my disappointment: nothing new or unique, just sharp Black Metal situated at the border of classical and modern terms. It is noticeable that the only instrument intelligently sketched out is Hvall's bass! www.vme.no Rating: 0.85/1 (27.09)

PS. Sadly we have to inform you all that Terje Valfar Bakken (25 old years) was found dead Saturday 17.1.2004. Terje left his home Wednesday 14.01, when he did not return his family got worried and contacted the police. Saturday 17.01 our greatest fear was confirmed. Terje was found dead at Reppastolen in the Sogndal valley. It seemed as if Terje was on his way to the family cabin at Fagereggi. Due to the cold weather and deep snow the trip became much harder than Terje expected. When he realized that he would not be able to reach the cabin, he tried to make his way back down. Unfortunately he did not make it. Terje was found just above Reppastolen. Forensic evidence says that Terje died of hyperthermia. This tragic accident has made these times extremely difficult for his family, band members and friends. Terje was buried at Stedje church Tuesday 27.01. We hope you will respect his memory and let Terje's closest mourn in peace. A great man has passed away, but his music lives forever. R.I.P. (28.01)

WINDS(NOR)-"The Imaginary Direction of Time" CD'04 (12 tracks, 48. 10 min)
(THE END)

You should know by now that WINDS is one of my favorite bands for this new Millennium! The previous album is a Metal jewel and I listen to it very often with a certain delight! Yet… no more with subjectivism… as wicked voices would hurry to criticize the unprofessional manner to conceive and write a review… ha, ha… the new chapter is appreciatively the same… less romantic and melancholic than they started (with one exception: "Theory of Relativity" track, which is pretty peaceful and moreover features some shades of Psychedelic, in PINK FLOYD style), with various references to Progressive and Classic and less to Dark. Yet… I think it is rather too technical and sophisticated with fantastic guitar riffs, a sober bass, a grave piano, technical battery and an amazing keyboard. I am sure, the combination of Dark and Classical continues to fascinate while the voices, not at all aggressive, simply provide certain "roundness", which is specific to WINDS' sound. I find difficult to judge if this album is better than the previous… probably as technique… the answer is affirmative, in other words, the new sound is focused more on guitars and less on atmosphere. Those violin tunes come out with a melancholic note for the sound and, I confess, this kind of approach impresses me more and more. If I need to find negative aspects, then I could punctuate the tracks' resemblance; they all are in the same manner even similar with previous ones… rather too cursive and sec… and in lack of elements which could have brought some diversity. Nevertheless: elegant, exquisite, elaborated, imposing… Progressive Classical Metal of first class! This is indeed a great piece of collection! www.winds.ws Rating: 0.96/1 (19.02)

WOODS OF BELIAL(FIN)-"Deimos XIII" CD'03 (5 tracks, 51. 02 min)
(FIREBOX)

This is a band founded eight years ago and which debut is released only now… This is not quite right… on the contrary, I find it a real problem. Anyway… This Finnish trio approaches a weird Industrialized Black Doom Metal with obvious influences of Suicide Music. So, you can listen to special effects, noises, depressive voices, agonizing guitar solos, doomed bass tunes… all in a shape of a disgusting nightmare… definitely the opposite of a comfortable audition. www.metal-asylum.org/wob Rating: 0.79/1 (21.11)

YEARNING(FIN)-"Evershade" CD'03 (8 tracks, 50. 09 min)
(HOLY)

Sincerely I thought this legendary band has split! In other words, this album is indeed a nice surprise! I always perceived a certain Dark melancholic aura around this band during these almost 10 years of existence and the fans had to get acquainted with albums more and more depressive. Well the specific factor determining the unique YEARNING sound was and still is the voice low and sober tonality. In the same time, I must say, the Dark atmosphere created by all the instruments was always a Nordic one, somehow frozen but full of melodiousness and harmony. The new compositions don't leave the band's usual musical line and the Dark note still has sources in Heavy, Gothic and Death Metal. The keyboard seems to follow a more inspired line while the vocals profile even better the musical background and the guitars stepped on a second place. I'd say it is a good album but in the same time a little too rusty from a stylistic perspective and I don't believe it belongs to our present times. Tragic Dark Gothic Metal? Well sounds a little too pompous, doesn't it? But this tends to be the most accurate description I can make for what these Finns perform for some good years! I think this material will wake up some nostalgia but nothing more. Probably like in SOULGRIND or TRISTITIA case… Rating: 0.80/1 (18.10)

YOUR SHAPELESS BEAUTY(FRA)-"My Swan Song" CD'03 (9 tracks, 45. 26 min)
(ADIPOCERE)

It has been a long while since I lost contact with these French musicians. I remember in 1995 they tried desperately to use and combine as many and various styles as possible, from Heavy, Gothic or Doom to Death or Black Metal. We always kept in touch and I expected their debut soon to be released. Well, they released only a demo so far and a CD containing some live tracks and a few bonus tracks. What does YSB bring in 2003? Well… a mixture not quite inspired of Dark Doom and Death Metal in which some atmospheric, melodic and even Gothic touches were inserted and outlined by female vocals and a violin. Even if the execution is OK, my disappointment is huge since I find sad that the French musicians are still looking for a musical identity, after more than 10 years of activity. They experiment various fields, from those super brutal to the melodic and atmospheric ones but not putting in any real correlation or any harmony between those extremes. It all seems to be an unfortunate "copy/paste" action. I feel sorry that I have to be that critical with a band that, even if having all the support form the French label, actually brings nothing new. This is just another modest and faded Dark Doom Metal release. Rating: 0.78/1 (08.11)

YWOLF(HUN)-"Night Of The Werewolf" CD'03 (8 tracks, 50. 02 min)
(ADIPOCERE)

I haven't understood much of this album! Should it be Orchestral Metal? Should it be other kind of Black Metal? All that is here means synthetizer work, less improvement solely skilfulness in execution and nothing else in addition. And we aren't talking about a debut… The vocals, although different, are pretty modest and comparable to other dozens of Black Metal's. Conceptually, the album might have a serious background but from a more or less superficial audition I wouldn't say that YWOLF could impress anyone. And I really am not keen to listen to this album again! Rating: 0.70/1 (18.09)

ZERAPHINE(GER)-"Traumaworld" CD'03 (13 tracks, 56. 36 min)
(E-WAVE)

Ex DREADFUL SHADOWS members have decided to found a new project in 2000 and, in three years they already released two albums. Their last material is a classical Gothic Rock mixed with an impressing Electro and Pop amalgam. It is, if you like, a great replica to DE/VISION! The male voice has an incredibly elegant tonality and I must tell you that the instruments follow the sound harmony not abusing of virtuosity impulses. It is a very appealing easy and comestible album and it really can't upset anyone. I admit I have been listening to the album for a couple of days with a huge interest and I still am fascinated by this sound! Honestly, I have no idea what fascinates me at this material… perhaps the "chastity" of the music they created. Yet we still should not forget that the album sets free a certain sad melancholic Dark aura and sometimes… even romantic… It is somehow a true musical balm for all citizens of earth who felt like victims at least once in their life. In other words, this is an album that can only please and satisfy DEPECHE MODE's fans or disciples! www.zeraphine.de Rating: 0.86/1 (08.11)

MAYHEM/THE MEADS OF ASPHODEL(NOR/UK)-"Freezing Moon, Carnage"/"Jihad" splitCD'03 (8 tracks, 35. 39 min)
(SUPERNAL)

It is said that those two MAYHEM tracks are the only ones recorded in studio in the "golden formula". In fact, we can hear a very interesting into and a weird Black Metal track flavored with various touches. Probably it is a perfect catch for the collectors. The other band brings here a kind of MCD featuring 4 tracks already released in a LP version along with 2 bonus tracks. The Black Metal with Eastern influences performed by these English musicians sounds more melodic and features serious Oriental tunes and I suppose that the material is a kind of manifesto for what happened on 11 September at WTC. There are tunes reminding me of THE KOVENANT… as for the rest I think it is a material rather experimental but quite pleasing to the ear! I say it once again: probably this split is dedicated especially to the collectors! Rating: 0.80/1 (06.01)

RAVENCLAW/SVARROGH(AUT/GER)-split CD'03 (14 tracks, 44. 13 min)
(ATLANTIDA)

The Lithuanian label is famous for the compilations released so far. Right here I review a split of two opposite bands both in music and concept. RAVENCLAW is simply a copy of HROSSHARSGRANI project featuring an ambient and atmospheric sound with a melancholic peaceful aura of legend. I think it is natural to be this way since Alex, who is known for his activity in a band under CCP Records, has founded this very project beside Ruslanas, a guy from Atlantida. In 2002, the two had released "Where Mighty Ravens Fly" demo. I understood there were some changes in line up and thus Dimo Dimov is a part of this acoustic project. SVARROGH is Dimo's musical project and he acts as well in HATRED DIVINE, a band that actually pleased me not. Having on basis a mediocre sound, Dimo reminds us of those debutante bands that 10 years ago were desperately trying to reach their chance by approaching music in the same embarrassing manner! atlantida@takas.lt Rating: 0.72/1 (12.01)

No Colours Records presents:

TORRENT



"Between the stones"
Mini LP/Mini CD 9 €
This is fast Black Metal art with morbid lyrics!

SATANIC WARMASTER



"... of the night"
Mini LP/Mini CD 9 €
2 depressive and long Black Metal tracks !

Woodtemple



"The call from the pagan woods"
CD 13 €
The 2nd Pagan Metal masterpiece!

Graveland



"Blood of Heroes"
Mini CD 9 €
The EP remastered finally on MCD!

Abyssic Hate



"Suicidal emotions"
Digi CD 13 €

DARKESTRAH



"Sary oy"
CD 13 €
This is fantastic Pagan Black Metal from Kyrgyzstan! This is the frist album release from "Curse of KvN" officially distributed by NC!

Urgehal



"Massive terrestrial strike"
Gatefold LP/CD 13/11 €
The 2nd masterpiece of the Norwegian Black Metal Horde finally back in stock!

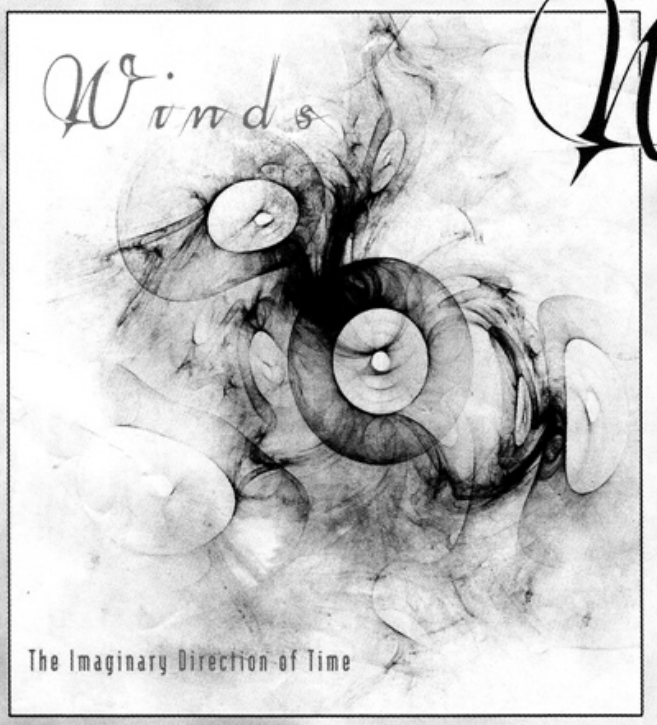
VELES/Legion



"Blood on my knife"
Split LP/CD 12/13 €
This is the triumph of the pagan beliefs wi
2 fantastic polish underground acts!

Soon:
Pest new MCD/LP
Nyktalgia "Nyktalgia" Digi CD
Inquisition "Into the infernal regions of the ancient cult" DLP (with bonustracks!)
Inquisition new LP/CD
Nargaroth "Rasluka Part I" 10" Mini LP/Mini CD

ALL PRICES ARE EXCLUDING POSTAGE! ASK FOR OUR FREE MAILORDERLIST!
NO COLOURS, POSTFACH 1119, D-04767 MÜGELN / GERMANY
www.no-colours-records.de (including Mailorderlist) info@no-colours-records.de



Winds

The Imaginary Direction of Time

The third album from WINDS, "The Imaginary Direction of Time," creates an uncompromising combination of classical, progressive and dark metal music with intricate sounds and harmonies. Following in the vein of the previous albums with philosophically charged lyrics, the new album takes WINDS to new heights both in the lyrical and musical field. This is without a doubt the band's most elegant album to date, with a new and added dimension of intricacy due to the increased collective effort in the compositional process. Through carefully designed arrangements and a world class production this is one of the most complete and unique releases for the year.

Subterranean Masquerade



Temporary Psychotic State

"Temporary Psychotic State" is a two track EP featuring over 17 minutes of classic progressive rock. Built upon layers of orchestral arrangements, psychedelic passages and rocking post rock blasting, this is a truly dynamic release that will appeal to fans of extreme metal as well to those who enjoy edgy, dark progressive rock. The release features a stunning line-up including Paul Khur (November's Doom), JWW (Agalloch), Tino LoSicco (Epoch of Unlight), a guest appearance by Andy Winter (Winds) and an ensemble of strings, keyboards and folklore female vocals.

"Bringing forth the most delicate and intricate of musical textures, SUBTERRANEAN MASQUERADE, create a palette of intimate wonders that weave through a myriad of influences and layered emotions, ultimately unearthing something progressive, unique, distinct, and more importantly, creating something powerful on a grand and subtle scale..."

- Chris Bruni (BW&BK)

Crisis

Out in May CRISIS "Like Sheep Led To Slaughter"

Like Sheep Led To Slaughter

The End Records www.theendrecords.com